

**IMAGERY IN ELIZABETHAN AND JACOBEAN DRAMA:**  
**SUGGESTIONS FOR A NEW APPROACH**

**A Thesis Presented for the Degree of Ph.D.**

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**by**

**R. A. FOAKES**

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Prefatory Note

In the first part of this dissertation the theoretical basis of a large number of writings on imagery is discussed, and some proposals made for a wider definition of poetic imagery and a new concept of dramatic imagery relevant to the criticism of poetic drama. Certain critics are mentioned frequently, and the liberty has been taken of referring to them merely by surname after the first mention. Three full-scale works bearing on imagery appeared after a large part of the dissertation was already in type. W. Clemen's The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery receives some notice in footnotes, and is based on his Shakespeares Bilder, which has been "considerably altered, revised and augmented".<sup>1</sup> The conception of imagery put forward by Clemen approaches that developed in this dissertation, for he stresses the interaction of poetic image and action in Shakespeare's mature plays.

In Shakespeare's tragedies we can observe again and again how the imagery takes its cue from some real event taking place on the stage, this event then being symbolically interpreted in the imagery<sup>2</sup>

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1

London, 1951. The quotation is on p.ix. See below pp.199n., 229n., 286.

2

ibid., p.174.

His main concern is with Shakespeare's development in the use of imagery, and in the chapters on individual plays (he does not discuss Macbeth and Julius Caesar) he considers one special aspect of imagery, Hamlet's own language and the atmosphere of corruption in Hamlet, imagery as a means of characterisation in Othello, or as revealing Shakespeare's feelings in Coriolanus. Clemen speaks modestly of his book as a "first tentative endeavour"<sup>1</sup> to give directions for the study of the development of Shakespeare's imagery, but it is a very suggestive and valuable work. William Empson<sup>2</sup> in The Structure of Complex Words has continued his studies of the complex significances individual words may attain in the plays and poems of Shakespeare and other authors. More recently B. Ifor Evans has published The Language of Shakespeare's Plays, a chronological survey of the plays with an emphasis that "imagery, however brilliant and original, is only one part of"<sup>3</sup> Shakespeare's language".

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<sup>1</sup>

ibid., p.231.

<sup>2</sup>

London, 1951. See below, pp.63-4.

<sup>3</sup>

London, 1952. The quotation is on p.xi.

The second part of the dissertation consists of analyses of the dramatic imagery of five plays. Certain terms are used in a special sense, or phrases invented to give names to various features of imagery, and definitions of these, together with references to the main pages in which they are discussed, follow this preface. Other references to these topics will be found under the heading 'Imagery' in the Index. A list of abbreviations used for titles of periodicals also precedes the main text.

**Brief Definitions of Terms Used**

**Subject-matter:** the name given by Miss Spurgeon to the illustrative or imported term of a poetic image; equals 'vehicle' (I. A. Richards) and 'minor term' (H. W. Wells). See pp.37-8.

**Object-matter:** indicates the term illustrated or main idea of a poetic image; equals 'tenor' (I. A. Richards) and 'major term' (H. W. Wells). See pp.37-8.

**Overall patterns:** groups of poetic images classified by subject-matter and extending throughout a play. See pp.143-9.

**Primary patterns:** groups of linked images, words and stage effects concentrated locally and making a vivid impact of short duration. See pp. 212-6.

**Images of impression:** poetic images working mainly by suggestion, evocation or sensuous appeal. See pp.175-7.

**Images of thought:** poetic images which work mainly by bringing an idea to life, by vigour or novelty. See pp.175-7.

**Symbolic description:** description in poetry which implies far more than it says, and has sensuous appeal. See pp.152-3, 164-6.

**Direct imagery:** actions or visual or auditory effects employed on the stage which have a symbolic value. See pp.157-8.

List of Abbreviations Used

E.L.H.	The Journal of English Literary History
E.S.	English Studies
J.E.G.P.	Journal of English and Germanic Philology
J.H.I.	Journal of the History of Ideas
M.L.Q.	Modern Language Quarterly
M.L.R.	Modern Language Review
M.P.	Modern Philology
N.andQ.	Notes and Queries
P.M.L.A.	Publications of the Modern Language Association of America
P.Q.	Philological Quarterly
R.E.S.	Review of English Studies
S.A.B.	Shakespeare Association Bulletin
S.P.	Studies in Philology
T.L.S.	Times Literary Supplement

The titles of certain frequently mentioned books are given in a short form after the first full reference has been made; for instance, C. E. E. Spurgeon's Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us is shortened to Shakespeare's Imagery.

**PART 1**

**CHAPTER 1**

**The Study of Imagery: A Critical Survey**



THE STUDY OF IMAGERY: A CRITICAL SURVEY

Of recent years the study of poetic imager, has become increasingly important as a critical approach to poetry, particularly to the works of Shakespeare, as is indicated by a recent survey of Shakespeare criticism over the past fifty years, in which the author, Kenneth Muir, devoted a quarter of the space at his disposal to a discussion of works dealing with "Imagery, Symbolism, and the Liberty of Interpreting".<sup>1</sup> Most of the large number of writings on imagery published during the last twenty years or so have been influenced by the work of a few critics, notably Caroline Spurgeon and I. A. Richards, and there has been a certain homogeneity in the general approach of various groups of writers influenced by one or other of these critics. The following discussion of criticism is divided into sections partly on a chronological basis, partly so that the works of those groups of critics whose views have much in common are discussed together. The aims of this survey are to illustrate the way in which certain trends of thought have dominated the study of imagery, and by relating the study of imagery to its background in other fields of work, to suggest reasons for the general adoption of a rather narrow conception of a poetic image, and for other critical attitudes and assumptions commonly made with regard to imagery.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Fifty Years of Shakespeare Criticism' in Shakespeare Survey 4, Cambridge 1951, pp.1-25. The section mentioned occupies pp.18-25.

(1) Criticism before Spurgeon: Practical

The modern interest in Shakespeare's imagery was anticipated in 1794 by Walter Whiter, who set out to explain various passages in the plays according to a new principle "derived from Mr. Locke's doctrine of the association of ideas".<sup>1</sup> Words might suggest others of similar sound, imagery might be derived from remembered metaphors or from things actually present to the senses; the examination of combinations of ideas linked thus by chance, not by intention, might help to explain disputed lines. Whiter provided a mass of examples to support this thesis, explained many curious connections of ideas, observed several linked images which occur in more than one play, notably the now famous fawning-dogs-candy linkage, and suggested sources for images in the theatre and pageantry of the Jacobean age. The lines of investigation which Miss C. F. E. Spurgeon and E. Armstrong have recently shown to be very fruitful, were both foreshadowed by Whiter's book. His claim that the linkages of ideas he was examining were accidental, that the poet had been "totally unconscious"

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A Specimen of a Commentary on Shakespeare, 1794: the quotation is from the title to Part II of the book, p. 61ff. The first part, an analysis of As You Like It, is less interesting, but shows that the author took some trouble over his researches, for he cites Florio's Second Fruits and Sidney's Apologie for Poetrie, and shows considerable knowledge of Elizabethan drama. His book seems to have been rediscovered by an anonymous reviewer of W. Clemen's Shakespeares Bilder in T.L.S., September 8th, 1936, and has been mentioned in other critical works since.

of them,<sup>1</sup> has also come to be an important question in present-day discussion of imagery. For the assumption often made now that all imagery proceeds from the unconscious mind, has an important bearing on the way imagery is examined and on the conclusions reached.

Whiter's intention was not to write on Shakespeare's poetic imagery, but to explain obscurities in the plays, and not until a century or so later was any lengthy analysis made of imagery in Elizabethan drama. Nineteenth century Shakespeare criticism contains some reference to imagery, although its general emphasis is on character, culminating in A. C. Bradley's studies of the tragic heroes in his Shakespearean Tragedy (1904). It is notable, however, that just as Coleridge used the word 'image' loosely to indicate any phrase evoking a mental image or describing a scene or event,<sup>2</sup> so Bradley meant both poetic image and the physical presentation on the stage when he observed that in Macbeth "the image of blood is forced upon us continually ..."<sup>3</sup> F. I.

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<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*, p.71; see also pp.64-5.

<sup>2</sup> cf. the famous passage in Biographia Literaria, Chapter 15: "It has been observed before that images ... though faithfully copied from nature, and as accurately represented in words, do not of themselves characterize the poet ..."

<sup>3</sup> Shakespearean Tragedy, 2nd edition, 1905, p.335.

Carpenter, writing in 1895, seems to have been a pioneer in narrowing the meaning of the term to its usual modern critical sense, using 'imagery' as a collective term for metaphor and simile.<sup>1</sup> He listed according to sources the most striking metaphors and similes occurring in plays by notable Elizabethan dramatists, Shakespeare excepted, examined the way they used imagery, and concluded by commenting on the development from ornamental imagery in the plays of Peele and Lyly to 'dramatic' imagery in those of Webster and Tourneur. There are many interesting suggestions in Carpenter's book; he observed that metaphor is the most dramatic of figures of speech, and pointed out that "mere vividness of visual impression" is not an essential quality of metaphor; that it is characteristic of dramatic writers - he cited Aeschylus and Shakespeare - to make "the ideas subservient to the emotion, instead of making the emotion, for the moment, subservient to the idea, the picture",<sup>2</sup> as do Homer and Spenser with their pictorial power. This conclusion, however, that the sensory impression evoked is not the most important, not even

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<sup>1</sup> Metaphor and Simile in the Minor Elizabethan Drama, Chicago, 1895. The word 'image' occurs frequently in the text, but the fact that the longer phrase 'Metaphor and Simile' appears in the title may indicate that it was not an accepted usage.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 170-1.

an essential feature of dramatic trope, was reached only after an examination of images classified according to their pictorial or sensory source. This method of classification has nevertheless remained the most usual. On the question of whether images are conscious or unconscious in origin Carpenter contradicted himself, for while he praised the conscious craftsmanship of several dramatists, he criticised the imagery of Gorboduc because it is "not organic, but ... conscious and ornamental".<sup>1</sup> A tendency to equate 'conscious' and 'ornamental' is common to many critics, but here the equation is made, and elsewhere in the book its validity denied. In spite of a certain amount of confusion, as here, and the vagueness of some of its terminology, the book is valuable for its many acute observations; the analyses of individual authors are much too cursory.

The next important work on imagery was H. W. Wells'<sup>2</sup> Poetic Imagery Illustrated from Elizabethan Literature. His aim was to determine the imaginative value of

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<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*, see also pp.x, 75, 164.

<sup>2</sup> New York, 1924. Wells states that the book was finished in 1918. Note should be made of E. E. Stoll's John Webster (Boston, 1905) which contains some interesting analysis of other Jacobean dramatists.

metaphors by classifying under seven headings, the Decorative, Sunken, Violent, Radical, Intensive, Expansive and Exuberant images. He investigated the use of these types of metaphors by various Elizabethan authors, claiming that each category formed the representative imagery of a certain author, e.g. that Marlowe used mainly the Exuberant and Donne chiefly the Radical image. Shakespeare he found to be master of all types. His categories are too indefinite, and overlap considerably, but are interesting as an attempt at a formal classification according to the relation between the terms of metaphors. Wells confined his discussion to metaphor and simile; the purpose of his book was, as he put it, "to describe poetic metaphor",<sup>1</sup> and he took his illustrations at random from poetry or drama. Consequently his categories, with the exception of 'Radical' as indicating the imagery of Donne, have not proved of much use in literary criticism. He recognised, however, that there are two terms in an image, which he called the major and minor terms, and that those images are especially characteristic of poetic drama in which the term suggesting the metaphor, that is, the object-matter or underlying idea, is more important than the sensory impression.<sup>2</sup> He thus

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<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*, p.27.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, pp.25-6.

arrived by different means at a conclusion similar to that of Carpenter cited above.

<sup>1</sup>  
Elizabeth Holmes examined the imagery of much the same dramatists as Carpenter, but included a long chapter on Shakespeare; her approach, however, was very different, for she was especially interested in the relationship of their imagery to that of the metaphysical poets. The incidental remarks she made were often most interesting, especially in her discussion of Shakespeare's imagery. She observed his "unusual sensitiveness to the latent associations of words and images", <sup>2</sup> how words in permanent association recur together in the plays, and how images may develop by thought or sound suggestion. She also discussed the sources of images, thereby continuing in some measure the work of both Whiter and Carpenter, and foreshadowing Miss Spurgeon's analysis according to the source of the visual impression, or subject-matter. E. E. Kellett had earlier observed Shakespeare's realisation of the manifold meanings of a word, how he "lights upon it in one of its senses, and before we have time to turn

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<sup>1</sup>

Aspects of Elizabethan Imagery, Oxford, 1929.

<sup>2</sup>

ibid., p.43.

round we behold him leaving it in another",<sup>1</sup> but he did not pursue this theme very far. Another interesting essay relating solely to Shakespeare was Edmund Blunden's 'Shakespeare's Significances'; he pointed out some of the plays on words, hidden puns and repetitions in King Lear, all of which, he claimed, contribute to the meaning, but are frequently ignored.<sup>2</sup>

Mrs. F. C. Kolbe approached Shakespeare's plays from a different point of view, taking it as his thesis that Shakespeare

secures the unity of each of his greater plays not only by the plot, by linkage of characters ... and by appropriateness of style, but by deliberate repetition throughout the play of at least one set of words or ideas in harmony with the plot.<sup>3</sup>

Kolbe gave impressive lists of repetitive words such as 'blood' and 'darkness' in Macbeth, and of ideas such as the isolation of the hero in Coriolanus; the lists throw light on many of the plays, but do not provide a key to their meaning, as he seemed to believe. He said of The Winter's Tale, "I arrived at my definition of the theme ... by the simple inductive process of

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<sup>1</sup> 'Some Notes on a Feature of Shakspeare's Style' in Suggestions, Cambridge, 1923, pp.67-78. The quotation is on p.69.

<sup>2</sup> 1929, reprinted in Shakespeare Criticism 1919-35, ed. Bradby (World's Classics), London, 1936. pp.327-42.

<sup>3</sup> Shakespeare's Way, London, 1930, p.2.



noting the frequency of dominant words".<sup>1</sup> His method, like that of Miss Spurgeon later, was that of mathematical analysis; he counted words or ideas often expressed in images, and she counted images. It is notable that he believed the repetitions he discussed to be deliberate on the part of Shakespeare; most critics avow or imply their belief in an unconscious origin and unconscious iteration of images.

Several other works treated imagery more generally. T. Hilding Svartengren compiled a list of "intensifying similes", or "such proverbial metaphorical comparisons as intensify a quality or an action to an indefinite high degree".<sup>2</sup> Many were taken from literary works, and they include a large number from Shakespeare's plays. The similes were arranged in groups according to the source of the subject-matter, as Miss Spurgeon was later to list the images of Shakespeare's plays, but, as Svartengren admitted, in his work it was a quite arbitrary arrangement and an alphabetical listing would have been as adequate.

A more important work was S. J. Brown's The World of Imagery.<sup>3</sup> a lengthy analysis of the nature and function of

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<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*, pp.100-1.

<sup>2</sup> Intensifying Similes in English, Lund (Sweden), 1918, p.xxii.

<sup>3</sup> The World of Imagery, London, 1927.

poetic imagery, that is, metaphor and simile, in poetry chiefly. In his view the function of metaphor was to give "to the expression of thought colour, vigour, intensity, not logical clearness",<sup>1</sup> and at the same time to give pleasure and move, conveying emotionally an idea not otherwise easily expressed, as for instance many religious concepts. Although he tended to define imagery in the manner of other critics, according to a sensory basis,<sup>2</sup> and recognised that imagery is natural to the expression of emotion, Brown's views were unusual in that he stressed the thought content of imagery and saw its primary function as the conveyance of ideas, calling metaphor "a reasoning by analogy".<sup>3</sup> In this connection an article by C. W. Valentine is interesting: after conducting a series of experiments with university students in an attempt to discover how far visual imagery helps in the appreciation of poetry, he concluded that a poem may be enjoyed with little or no imagery visualised by the reader, that there is no evidence to "bear out the suggestion that visual imagery is essential

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<sup>1</sup>  
ibid., p.57.

<sup>2</sup>  
He began by defining an image as "words or phrases denoting a sense-perceptible object used to designate --- some other object of thought" (pp.1-2), and would not allow much metonymy to be figurative, because it led "not to the abstract by means of the concrete, but to the concrete by the use of an abstract or general term" (p.158).

<sup>3</sup>  
ibid., p.68.

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as it is said to be by some literary critics". He mentioned no critics by name, but the work of Carpenter, Elizabeth Holmes, Svartengren and Brown shows how common is the view that an image conveys a picture; and indeed it was a fundamental postulate

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of Miss Spurgeon. Miss Maud Bodkin's statement that

My own experience in regard to Coleridge's poem [i.e. The Ancient Mariner] is that at the moment of completest appreciation no imagery, other than the words, is present. I am in some manner aware of a whole of far-reaching significance, concentrated like a force behind any particular stanza or line 3

supports Valentine's argument. She observed that different "memory-complexes exert their selective influence" on different individual's appreciation of poetry, but considered some images to have a universal, archetypal character.

The symbolic value of certain traditional images

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'The Function of Images in the Appreciation of Poetry' in British Journal of Psychology, xiv (October 1923), pp.164-91.

2

This is perhaps a fit place to draw attention to another anticipation of Miss Spurgeon's work, a German doctoral dissertation Die Metaphern in Shakespeares Romeo and Juliet, Rheine (Westphalia), 1927, by Helene Hülsmann. Metaphors are listed according to subject-matter, the use of traditional metaphors discussed in relation to other authors, and statistical tables provided. The bibliography indicates a few earlier works in German on imagery, and related topics.

3

Maud Bodkin, Archetypal Patterns in Poetry, London, 1934, pp.37-8.

4

ibid., p.39.

and words, for example, wind as the breath of life, the seasons, and others observed by Miss Bodkin, which she claimed provoke the same response in all readers, was noted earlier by G. H. W. Rylands. He pointed out that many words have traditional associations as symbols of perfection, of desires or fears, words such as 'rose', 'gold', 'summer', 'hill', 'isle', citing many examples from poetry of various ages in support of this thesis.<sup>1</sup> He said "we may define these words as the idealistic imagery of poetry", considering them apparently to be equivalent to images, since their meaning is often subsidiary to their emotional value.

Rylands also discussed at length Shakespeare's stylistic development, showing how the playwright only achieved a truly successful dramatic style through a combination of prose and verse. He observed how conceits, conventional pictorial images, gradually disappeared from the plays, to be replaced roughly from 1600 onwards by more tightly-packed metaphor; in the final plays he found a return to the "idealistic"

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Words and Poetry, London, 1928. The quotation is on p.58.

imagery of Marlowe and Spenser.<sup>1</sup> He suggested that in Shakespeare's best plays verse and prose became almost interchangeable, and that images follow close on one another linked by the catching up of a word in a different sense. On this point Rylands would agree with J. M. Murry's statement regarding Shakespeare: "We have not, and we are not intended to have time to unfold his metaphors ...",<sup>2</sup> which are linked by verbal suggestion. Mastery of imagery, Murry felt, was "in the harmonious total impression produced by a succession of subtly related images".<sup>3</sup> In some sense then both these writers suggested what Miss Spurgeon was to demonstrate, the iteration and linkage of imagery in Shakespeare's plays. In another respect these critics differed widely; both were aware of the wealth of imagery in Shakespeare's work, but while Rylands claimed that in his mature plays Shakespeare "reduced blank verse to the level of prose", and

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<sup>1</sup> As noted above, a development in the Elizabethan drama from 'ornamental' imagery towards more concentrated metaphor was suggested by Carpenter and Wells, and illustrated more fully by Elizabeth Holmes.

<sup>2</sup> 'Metaphor' (Countries of the Mind, 2nd Series, 1931) in ed. Bradby, Shakespeare Criticism 1919-35, pp. 226-41. The quotation is on p.230.

<sup>3</sup> ibid., p.235.

that the "functions and styles of poetry and prose" in Elizabethan drama are "most nearly interchangeable".<sup>1</sup> Murry insisted on the superiority of poetry and the poetic image over prose and the prose image. For him, "The imagery of poetry is in the main complex and suggestive; the imagery of prose single and explicit".<sup>2</sup>

The conflict between these views has proved to be important in the discussion of imagery; Rylands thought of Shakespeare's plays primarily as drama; Murry thought of them primarily as poetry, and the majority of writers on imagery in drama have supported Murry's view. Another important aspect of this conflict of views is the opposition Murry set up between poetry and prose, an opposition usually implied, but not always made explicit, in the discussion of imagery. F. W. Bateson indeed was as explicit as Murry on this question, asserting that poetry employs the connotations (associations) of words as well as the denotations, prose only the denotations.<sup>3</sup> This assumption was the basis of

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<sup>1</sup> Rylands, op.cit., pp.154, 27.

<sup>2</sup> Murry, op.cit., p.234.

<sup>3</sup> English Poetry and the English Language, Oxford, 1934, see especially pp.14ff.

William Empson's Seven Types of Ambiguity,<sup>1</sup> an analysis of the various kinds of ambiguities, the wealth of implication to be found in poetry. There are many penetrating analyses of lines, often whole poems, and Empson allowed a wide sense to 'metaphor', including single words,<sup>2</sup> but the book was based on this assumption about poetry:

... two statements are made as if they were connected, and the reader is forced to consider their relations for himself. The reason why these facts should have been selected for a poem is left to him to invent; he will invent a variety of reasons and order them in his own mind. This, I think, is the essential fact about the poetical use of language.<sup>3</sup>

Empson was thus not concerned with the directed connotations of poetry, but put forward this theory giving him scope to invent or introduce all kinds of

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London, 1930.

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'Metaphor' meant simply using a word in a sense different from normal, to Elizabethan rhetoricians and critics. Thus Puttenham calls it "the figure of transport .. a kinde of wresting of a single word from his owne right signification; to another not so naturall; but yet of some affinitie or conveniencie with it .." (The Arte of English Poesie, 1589, ed. E. Arber, 1869, p.189). The word is now commonly used in a different sense, as indicating the more intense figures of speech as distinct from simile, and often with the special implication that the figure must evoke a mental image. Thus metaphors proper, such as "... the time you may so hoodwink" (Macbeth, IV, iii, 72), or "let this talke glide" (Revenge's Tragedy I, iii, 80) are frequently ignored in discussions of imagery. The Oxford English Dictionary gives only the first of these meanings, the technical sense, but the most recent quotation given is of 1876.

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op.cit., p.25.

personal associations into his interpretation. Consequently his analysis of whole poems, where the presence of the whole context set some bounds on his detection of hidden associations was very much more convincing than his examination of excerpts from poems and plays, where irrelevancies were introduced. He considered passages in isolation, without any necessary reference to context, author's intention, or historical meaning, and thus displayed openly a tendency which has been common in discussions of imagery. At the same time, Empson's criticism was often subtle and acute, and like Rylands, he observed that drama makes special demands, that in Hamlet's soliloquies

The words are intended for the stage; they certainly convey something to an audience; and there is no time for them to convey anything more definite than this [i.e. "flashes of fancy in the directions I have indicated"] before the soliloquy has swept on to another effect of the same kind.

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J. L. Lowes had earlier analysed at length and brilliantly the associations of Coleridge's great poems, exploring the literary background from which much of

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ibid., p.92. Empson was speaking of a passage in Hamlet. He also followed Rylands in having some very acute remarks on Shakespeare's use of hendiadys (pp.94-101).

2

The Road to Xanadu. A Study in the Ways of the Imagination, New York, 1927.



Coleridge's imagery derived. Lowes, however, had a notebook of the poet, the gloss to The Ancient Mariner, and other information to guide him in his search through books of travel, mysticism, and other topics, for sources. In this way he managed to re-create for us some of the associations the poems had for their author. This is a very different approach from that of Empson, who introduced his own personal associations into his discussion of passages of verse. Both approaches have a place in criticism, but the problems raised by them are, how far it is possible to separate the critic's personal associations from those held by the poet, and to what extent such associations may be attributed to an author. These have some relevance to the discussion of imagery, since it has been common to classify and discuss imagery according to its sources, as did Carpenter, Elizabeth Holmes, and others, particularly since Miss Spurgeon's writings were published.

To return to the other aspect of the conflict noted between Marry and Rylands, the question of regarding plays as drama or as poetry, two critics at least have been very definite on this point. The starting-point of G. Wilson Knight's criticism of Shakespeare's plays was that each has a "spatial" reality, an "omnipresent and mysterious reality

brooding motionless over and within the play's movement", provided by a "set of correspondences" extending through the play independently of the time sequence, plot, or "temporal" reality.<sup>1</sup> He was concerned chiefly with the "spatial" reality: "True, the plays were written as plays, and meant to be acted. But that tells us nothing relevant to our purpose"; we must "see each play as an expanded metaphor", examine poetic symbolism, and when images with similar associations recur, we must "be ready to see the presence of the associative value when the images occur alone".<sup>2</sup> Thus Wilson Knight approached the plays as poetry, seeing the characters as symbols in poetic visions, the discovery of which led him to make some rather violent interpretations. Although he paid attention to other features of the plays besides imagery, to dramatic symbolism and, occasionally, iterative words, his stress on the poetry as primarily important has influenced other writers considerably. Thus L. C. Knights, who

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<sup>1</sup> The Wheel of Fire, London, 1930, pp.3ff.

<sup>2</sup> ibid., pp.14, 16. Wilson Knight's approach to Shakespeare was amplified in his other books, notably The Imperial Theme, 1931, and The Shakespearian Tempest, 1932. In the former he made the point that "The action is not decorated with images, the images are the action". (p.20).

acknowledged a debt to Wilson Knight, stated quite categorically, "the only profitable approach to Shakespeare is a consideration of his plays as dramatic poems"<sup>1</sup>. He proceeded to analyse the language of Macbeth, noting the sense of confusion, the interplay of associations, the contrast between the natural and the unnatural, order and disorder, and thus discovered the theme of the play:

Macbeth is a statement of evil...Two main themes .. are blended in the play - the themes of the reversal of values and of unnatural disorder...All this is obscured by false assumptions about the category 'drama'; Macbeth has greater affinity with The Waste Land than with The Doll's House.<sup>2</sup>

Both these critics sought in the poetry for themes, attitudes, statements of values which were somehow obscured if the plays were considered as drama.

Wilson Knight for example reduced Troilus and Cressida<sup>3</sup> to a conflict between Love and War, "primary values" which he equated with emotion and reason respectively.

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<sup>1</sup> 'How Many Children had Lady Macbeth?' (1933) in Explorations, London, 1946, p.6.

<sup>2</sup> ibid., p.18.

<sup>3</sup> Wilson Knight, The Wheel of Fire, p.51ff. F. C. Kolbe's mathematical analysis of repeated words led to somewhat similar conclusions; he summed up Love's Labour's Lost thus: "It is a straight fight between study and love", (Shakespeare's Way, p.62).

The result of using the methods of these critics was a tendency to reduce complex plays to abstractions in this manner, or to regard a play as an amplification of some moral platitude.

Harley Granville-Barker differed from most of the critics so far considered in that he was a playwright and possessed an intimate knowledge of the theatre. He said:

The actor's speeches must be so written that not only the sound but the sense - even though the sound of a word or two should go wrong on the way - will travel easily and effectively.

and believed that the power of the memorable images in Hamlet is due to the fact that "in each case the phrase is sufficiently strange to arrest attention, yet not strange enough to puzzle".<sup>1</sup> These remarks remain of great interest, especially in view of curious and detailed analyses by writers who find obscure meanings in images, especially when considered in isolation from context. As noted above, Empson suggested a similar point of view, but as an aside, not as part of his main argument. In so far as Granville-Barker's remarks apply to Elizabethan drama, research into the natural philosophy and what we now call the psychology accepted in the period, has

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<sup>1</sup> On Dramatic Method, London, 1931, pp.32, 92.

produced some support for them. For evidence has been adduced to show that many of what are commonly considered fine poetic images were in fact almost literal scientific statements; that when Shakespeare spoke for instance of heart-strings being made soft (Hamlet III,iii,70-1), or cracking (King John V,vii,52), he was referring to genuine physiological characteristics of man, according to the belief of the age.<sup>1</sup>

The majority of critics so far considered<sup>2</sup> used the word 'image' in the strict sense of metaphor and simile. Of the exceptions, Kellett and Blunden had essays on

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<sup>1</sup> See Ruth L. Anderson, Elizabethan Psychology and Shakespeare's Plays, University of Iowa Humanistic Studies, Vol.3, No.4, 1927, especially p.87. cf. also H. K. Russell, 'Elizabethan Dramatic Poetry in the Light of Natural and Moral Philosophy' in P.Q., xii (April 1933), 187-95.

<sup>2</sup> Caroline F. E. Spurgeon's early articles, 'Leading Motives in the Imagery of Shakespeare's Tragedies' (Shakespeare Association Lecture 1930) in ed. Bradby, Shakespeare Criticism 1919-35, pp.18-61, 'Shakespeare's Iterative Imagery' (British Academy Lecture, 1931) in Aspects of Shakespeare, being British Academy Lectures, Oxford, 1933, pp.255-86, and 'Imagery in the Thomas More Fragment' in R.E.S., vi (July 1930), 257-70, have not been mentioned because the bulk of the material relevant to this discussion was included in her later book, and it seemed better to discuss this as a whole. Her influence on criticism after 1930 may, however, have been considerable.

Shakespeare's use of words, his repetitions and puns; Kolbe found iterative schemes of words or ideas in Shakespeare's plays; of the more recent critics, only Rylands, Eppson and Miss Bodkin used 'image' in a wide sense to include words which traditionally have a symbolic value co-extensive with their literal meaning, or non-pictorial metaphor, and none of these writers was interested primarily in imagery. Most seem to have thought of an image (metaphor or simile) as sensory in origin and evoking a mental picture, and images were classified and discussed according to this basis by Carpenter, Elizabeth Holmes, Svartengén, Helene Hilsmann and others. Indeed, only Maud Bodkin and C. W. Valentine expressly denied a need for visualisation, though S. J. Brown's stress on the thought content in images, and the awareness of Murry and Carpenter that images need not be visual, give support to their argument. In general imagery was thought to be emotive, suggesting manifold connotations or associations, and deriving from sensory sources.

Carpenter, Rylands and Granville-Barker were the only writers among those discussed who drew any distinction

between the use of imagery in poetry and its use in drama. They all suggested that dramatic poetry has special qualities, and Granville-Barker in particular drew attention to the need for verse in drama to be readily intelligible to a listening audience. A reader, on the other hand, has time to puzzle out obscurities, and can turn back the page where necessary. Empson hinted at a similar point of view in a casual remark, an aside from the main argument of his book. A distinction was more often made, and generally implied, between prose and poetry, the poetic image and the prose image. It was natural for this distinction to be important to critics such as Svartengren, Wells, Brown, Elizabeth Holmes, and Murry, who were concerned with poetic imagery in general, with the definition and kinds of imagery, or the development of a particular kind. All these drew examples from Elizabethan drama, and especially Shakespeare's plays, but the examination of language and imagery as the basis of a critical approach to the works of individual authors, especially dramatic authors such as Shakespeare, seems to have arisen from this more general discussion of poetic imagery. It is perhaps for this reason that most critics have written of the imagery of plays as if they

were poems; it is partly because an approach to drama through imagery or language seemed new and vital<sup>1</sup> that Blunden, Kolbe, Wilson Knight and Knights discovered layers of new meaning in images or iterative words, even claimed that the only way to arrive at the 'meaning' of the plays is by an analysis of imagery, and finally established the extreme position of Knights, that the only valid approach to Shakespeare's plays is to see them as dramatic poems.

Certain tendencies in the study of imagery before the appearance of Miss Spurgeon's book in 1935 may then be indicated. 'Imagery' had become more or less established as a term limited to metaphor and simile. Images were commonly thought of as evoking mental pictures, as having a basis in sensory experience, and, with the exception of Wells, critics had classified them according to the source of the subject-matter. The study of poetic imagery for its own sake, with examples drawn from drama, sometimes equally from drama and poetry, had become important enough by 1931

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<sup>1</sup> Wilson Knight and L. C. Knights believed that they were leading a reaction against criticism based on the analysis of character, in particular Bradley's Shakespearean Tragedy.



for the claim to be made that Elizabethan drama can only be profitably studied as poetry. There was also a tendency among some writers to find a play's meaning in its imagery; the poetry, the poetic imagery of drama had come to be its most important feature. Before going on to discuss Miss Spurgeon's Shakespeare's Imagery, which embodies most of these trends, a brief discussion of more general works on philology and poetry may throw some light on the rather sudden growth of interest in imagery in the years before 1935, and explain some peculiarities in the common critical attitudes towards imagery.

(ii) Criticism before Spurgeon; Theoretical

Three factors helped to create the growing interest in poetic imagery discussed above. One was the increasing importance of psychology, especially perhaps Freudian psychology, which has lent many terms to literary criticism, has encouraged the equation of poetry and dreams, and a search for and recognition of symbols and associations. The psychological analysis of the mind's working, and the study for this purpose of men's habits and ways of expressing themselves, have no doubt encouraged critics to seek an expression of a poet's habits and the workings of his mind in his poetic

imagery. The common interest in the conscious or unconscious origin of poetry has arisen largely as a result of thinking in psychological terms. Indeed, authors themselves have been influenced to the extent that some have tried consciously to reproduce in their writing subconscious streams of association. Examples of the influence of psychology on criticism may be found in F. C. Prescott's The Poetic Mind,<sup>1</sup> in which book Freud is frequently mentioned, and the vision of the poet equated with the vision of the dreamer, and in the statement of I. A. Richards and C. K. Ogden that words in poetry "are musical notations at the service of an emotional psychology".<sup>2</sup>

Another factor was the increasing study and importance of philology from the latter part of the nineteenth century onwards. It has been generally recognised that poetry occurs earlier than prose in all literatures, and a theory of the origin of language as

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<sup>1</sup> New York, 1922. See especially pp.20ff. and pp. 120-30.

<sup>2</sup> The Meaning of Meaning, London, 2nd edition revised, 1927, p.42. The authors are citing with approval Théodule Ribot's La Logique des Sentiments, Paris, 1905.

1  
a vehicle for expressing desires or feelings, or as  
a co-operative activity arising from the need for men  
to "awaken a response to their fellows and to influence  
their attitudes and acts"<sup>2</sup> has been put forward by many  
philologists. The older theory of language as a means  
of communicating or expressing ideas remained current,  
especially among grammarians<sup>3</sup> and philosophers such as  
Bertrand Russell, who stressed the importance for  
philosophy of a study language, and desired an ideal  
philosophical language in which words would be counters

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1  
see for example Otto Jespersen, Language, Its Nature  
Development and Origin, London, 1922, p.433. "Thoughts  
were not the first things to press forward and crave  
for expression: emotions and instincts were more  
primitive and far more powerful."

2  
Grace A. de Laguna, Speech, Its Function and Development,  
New Haven, 1927, p.19. of A. H. Gardiner, The Theory  
of Speech and Language, Oxford, 1932; in this work the  
co-operative character of speech was stressed, and  
words were claimed to be "primarily instrumental ...  
their function is to force or cajole the listener into  
looking at certain things" (p.33). de Laguna cited  
the essay by B. Malinowski, 'The Problem of Meaning in  
Primitive Languages', given as a supplement in The  
Meaning of Meaning, pp.296-336, by Richards and Ogden,  
in support of this thesis.

3  
Thus in spite of Jespersen's remark cited above (note 1),  
in his Essentials of English Grammar, London, 1933, he  
said, "Language is nothing but a set of human habits,  
the purpose of which is to give expression to thoughts  
and feelings ..." (p.16), thus giving primacy to the  
expression of thought.

with one fixed meaning.<sup>1</sup> It has been suggested that language should be differentiated from speech, that language, comprising syntax and grammar, is a system imposed on or developing from speech, to allow logical expression of ideas.<sup>2</sup> On the one hand, the philological theory of language (or speech) originating as an activity, and realisation that "in the literature transmitted to us poetry is found in every country to precede prose",<sup>3</sup> and on the other the philosophical aim of working out a strictly intellectual language, may have influenced Ogden and Richards, who drew a sharp distinction between the 'symbolic' and 'emotive' use of words. They said, "The symbolic use of words is statement... The emotive use of words ... is ... to express or excite feelings and attitudes".<sup>4</sup> This

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<sup>1</sup> A critical account of Russell's views was given in Max Black's Language and Philosophy, Ithaca, New York, 1949, pp.109-38.

<sup>2</sup> The differentiation of speech and language was elaborated by Gardiner; see above, note 2, p.27. of. also J. Vendryes, Le Langage, Paris, 1921: "Le langage spontane s'oppose ... au langage grammatical" (p.175).

<sup>3</sup> Jespersen, Language. Its Nature, Development and Origin, p.432.

<sup>4</sup> The Meaning of Meaning, p.149.

corresponds to a distinction between poetry as emotive<sup>1</sup> or sensory, and prose as scientific. Their book The Meaning of Meaning has had tremendous influence, especially in the United States, but so eminent a grammarian as Vendryes would have given it no support. He sought to show that idea and emotion are inextricably mixed in the use of language, that the most logical statements are always coloured by emotion: "Toujours l'affection enveloppe et colore l'expression logique de la pensée",<sup>2</sup> and that the only scientific languages are those which do not affect life, such as algebra.

The third factor affecting the growing importance of the study of poetic imagery was the trend of poetry itself in the latter half of the nineteenth and the beginning of this century. The French 'Symbolist' poets sought to make poetry approach music, to make it, in the words of Edmund Wilson, "even more a matter of

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<sup>1</sup> ibid, see especially p.210: "... in poetry we must consciously attend to the sensory characters of words, whereas in prose we need not do so".

<sup>2</sup> Le Langage, p.182.

the sensations and emotions of the individual than had been the case with Romanticism".<sup>1</sup> They sought to banish thought from poetry, and substitute for it suggestion; the aim of Mallarmé was never to name an object:

To name an object is to do away with three-quarters of the enjoyment of the poem which is derived from the satisfaction of guessing little by little: to suggest it, to evoke it - that is what charms the imagination. <sup>2</sup>

The French 'Symbolist' poets influenced many of the more eminent twentieth-century poets writing in English, notably T. S. Eliot, and particularly the influential 'Imagist' group formed in 1913. The aim of the 'Imagists' was precise description of concrete objects, but

the Imagists themselves sometimes confused the image, the clear evocation of a material thing, with the symbol, the word which stirs subconscious memories. Such, indeed, was their intention: their poetry was meant to widen outwards like the ripples from a stone dropped in clear water. <sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Axel's Castle, New York, 1931, pp.19-20. It is significant that Cleanth Brooks has an article (later reworked into an essay in his Tell Trough Urn entitled 'Shakespeare as a Symbolist Poet' in Yale Review xxxiv (June 1945), 642-65.

<sup>2</sup> ibid, p.20

<sup>3</sup> Michael Roberts in his Introduction to The Faber Book of Modern Verse, London, 1936, p.16. cf. for a statement of 'Imagist' aims T. E. Hulme's Speculations, London, 1924, and for an amplified restatement made in 1933, Ezra Pound's The ABC of Reading, London, 1951, p.63.

This awareness of and readiness to exploit the associations of words sometimes at the expense of meaning has become a feature of much modern literature,<sup>1</sup> and the theories of 'Symbolist' and later writers have influenced literary critics.

All three factors coalesced in much criticism, but their separate influence can sometimes be detected. Thus experiments derived from psychology, testing the reactions of students to verse, have been used in connection with literary criticism.<sup>2</sup> The philological argument that poetry occurs in literature before prose has led certain critics to believe that the best poetry was written in the infancy of society, that as language has grown more abstract it has ceased to be a satisfactory medium for poetry, and caused F. C. Prescott to conclude that as the best poetry was written in the youth of the race, so the best poetry of any poet is written in his youth, since imagination is most

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<sup>1</sup> For a rather bitter account of this process see John Sparrow's Sense and Poetry, London, 1934, especially the first chapter on 'Meaning and Association', pp.1-27.

<sup>2</sup> see for example June Downey, Creative Imagination, London, 1929.

effective then.<sup>1</sup> The theory of Mallarmé as stated by Arthur Symonds, that poetry attempts "to be, rather than to express: that is what Mallarmé has consistently ... sought in verse and prose",<sup>2</sup> has been echoed several times, often in almost identical words. So I. A. Richards said "It is never what a poem says which matters, but what it is". G. H. W. Rylands, "... it is not so much what poetry says that matters, as her remarkable way of saying it",<sup>3</sup> and A. E. Housman,<sup>4</sup> "Poetry is not the thing said but a way of saying it".

Certain ways of regarding poetry and poetic imagery emerged from these trends. On the one hand poetry tended to be equated with dreams, as arising from the unconscious mind, and prose tended to be seen as the vehicle of the conscious intellect. Then followed conclusions such as:

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<sup>1</sup> The Poetic Mind, New York, 1922, see especially pp.61, 69. Owen Barfield in his Poetic Diction, London, 1928, supported Prescott's view.

<sup>2</sup> cited in Sparrow, Sense and Poetry, p.30.

<sup>3</sup> I. A. Richards, Science and Poetry, London, 1926, p.25; G. H. W. Rylands, Words and Poetry, p.16. F. W. Bateson cites Richards' remark with approval in English Poetry and the English Language, p.12.

<sup>4</sup> The Name and Nature of Poetry, Cambridge, 1933, p.37.



The ordinary thought is analytical and abstract; the poetic thought purely imaginative and concrete.

The intellect ... is a shallow faculty; the unconscious is the deeper and more vital mind ... on the whole the unconscious mind is superior in insight and wisdom to the conscious one. 1

Some critics spoke of a kind of essence of poetry, or 2  
as often named, 'pure' poetry, unalloyed by any meaning,  
and the 'Symbolists' and 'Imagists' were praised for aiming  
at this purity. 3 The distinction made by I. A. Richards  
between 'scientific' and 'emotive' uses of language,  
that is, between prose and poetry, emphasised these  
trends, and the views of Richards gained many adherents.

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1  
F. C. Prescott, The Poetic Mind, pp.43, 90, 94.

2  
Housman, op.cit., pp.40-1. See also Prescott, op.cit., p.113: "Poetry always has an alloy of time and place, but the pure poetry to which this alloy clings is unqualified"; and Henri Brémont, La Poésie Pure, Paris, 1926, who condemned, as impure, prose, and "tout ce qui, dans un poème, occupe ou peut occuper immédiatement nos activités de surface, raison, imagination, sensibilité; tout ce que le poète nous semble avoir voulu exprimer, a exprimé en effet ... même d'une oeuvre où le sublime abonde, la qualité proprement poétique, l'ineffable est dans l'expression" (pp.22-3). See also the same author's Prayer and Poetry, English edition, London, 1927.

3  
Prescott, op.cit., p.111ff.

Michael Roberts spoke of "... the most valuable addition to modern criticism, the terminology of Mr. I. A. Richards".<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, poetic imagery came more into prominence; for metaphor and simile seemed the most emotive part of language, springing from the unconscious mind, and seemed also the outstanding feature of poetry, the feature which marked it off most clearly from prose. It could be stated that in the best poetry poetic imagery is neither ornamental, nor merely functional, but "it is an inseparable part of the theme. It is the theme";<sup>2</sup> and for the appreciation of imagery, the pleasure arising from the "proper activity of the imagination" lies

in the case of metaphor, when it is the pure content of the image, and not the reference, which delights.

3

In other words, the evocative power of one term, the subject-matter, the sensory element, is important, and

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<sup>1</sup> A Critique of Poetry, London, 1934, p.163. cf. also Bateson, *op.cit.*, p.12.

<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth Drew, Discovering Poetry, London, 1933, p.153.

<sup>3</sup> Owen Barfield, Poetic Diction, p.50n.

not what the image is really concerned with in its relation to context. Thus the work of these more general or theoretical critics supported, and in some instances provided a direct basis for the practical criticism examined in the previous section. Although there may often be no evidence of specific influence, it will be apparent how many of the ideas discussed reappear in later criticism.

(iii) Spurgeon and Clemen

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Caroline Spurgeon's Shakespeare's Imagery which appeared in 1935 has formed the basis of most subsequent criticism of Shakespeare's imagery. She studied his poetic imagery for a special purpose, to find out something about the man.<sup>2</sup> She was only interested in

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1  
Shakespeare's Imagery, and what it tells us, Cambridge, 1935.

2  
Such a study was exemplified in the work of Carpenter, who observed that the war imagery in Chapman's plays might throw some light on the dramatist's early life (Metaphor and Simile, p.124). Brown also said "there are few things that throw such light on the antecedents, the habits, and the temperament of a writer as a study of his imagery" (The World of Imagery, p.7).

"the little word-picture used by a poet to illustrate, illuminate, and embellish his thought", because she believed that these images proceeded from his unconscious mind and would reveal

the furniture of his mind ... the objects and incidents he observes and remembers, and perhaps most significant of all, those which he does not observe or remember. 1

Her definition of an image was amplified as "... any and every kind of simile as well as every kind of what is really compressed simile, metaphor", and she added, "I suggest that we divest our minds of the hint the term (image) carries with it of visual image only ...". 2 Nevertheless the two concepts, "word-picture" and "metaphor and simile" limit one another. In fact her interest was confined to such metaphors and similes as evoked for her a picture or sensory impression. The word 'picture' was something of a key-word in the book; her aim was always to discover "the picture which was constantly before Shakespeare's eyes". 3 Since this

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1 Shakespeare's Imagery, pp. 9, 4, 43ff.

2 ibid., p.5.

3 ibid., p.345.

concept limited also the study of iterative patterns of images in Shakespeare's plays, which formed the second part of her book, her analyses and conclusions were subjective, and often questionable. She condemned as misleading Wilson Knight's claim that 'gold-symbolism' is dominant in Timon of Athens, in which gold is referred to as many as twenty times in one scene, is used as a property, and apostrophised in some of the play's finest lines.<sup>1</sup> The picture before Shakespeare's eyes, she said, and therefore the dominant image in the play, is that of fawning dogs picturing false friends and flatterers. The two claims represent two ways of regarding the imagery of this play, and serve to indicate the limitations of Miss Spurgeon's concentration on pictorial metaphors.

Miss Spurgeon limited her analysis of imagery to one term of the image (metaphor or simile), to what she called the "subject-matter".<sup>2</sup> By this she meant the material illustrating the idea underlying the image; for her

Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care  
Macbeth, II, ii, 37

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<sup>1</sup> The Wheel of Fire, p.256ff. of. Spurgeon, op.cit., p.344-5.

<sup>2</sup> Shakespeare's Imagery, p.12.

was "a wonderful picture of knitting up the loose fluffy all-pervading substance of frayed-out floss silk";<sup>1</sup> she was interested only the subject-matter, the "ravell'd sleeve". She was not interested in the object or idea illustrated, the underlying idea, in what may be called the object-matter of the image, which in this case is dramatically more important, the amplification of the idea of sleep as a supreme benefit. What she considered to have been the imaginative picture dominant in Shakespeare's mind became automatically the dominant image-group in a play. She attempted to be objective in this matter by classifying and counting images according to subject-matter, the largest group being the dominant one. Her sensitivity, however, led her occasionally to reject this statistical method, as when she said that the dominant group in Hamlet is that of sickness, although by her own count there are several larger groups in the play.<sup>2</sup>

Miss Spurgeon then was concerned with poetic

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p.125.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp.367-71. The largest groups relating to Nature (32), Animals (27), Sport and Games (22), Body, Sense and Sleep (21), Sickness (20); the total number in Hamlet by her count was 279.

imagery in the strict sense of metaphor and simile, and in particular with the subject-matter of images, which she classified and considered in relation to the author's mind, not to their context in the plays. She was interested in Shakespeare's "pictorial imagination",<sup>1</sup> the picture in his mind as she interpreted it, not in the play's effect on reader or audience. Her approach to imagery was psychological and literary, and she was not concerned with the dramatic position and importance of images in the plays. For her Shakespeare's imagery was an unconscious reflection of his intimate experience, never a device used with conscious intention. She was the first to make a detailed analysis of the poetic imagery in Shakespeare's plays, and her Shakespeare's Imagery has had more influence in this field of study than any other work.

Her book was followed a year later (1936) by<sup>2</sup> W. Clemen's Shakespeares Bilder. Clemen paid tribute

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<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*, p.318.

<sup>2</sup> Shakespeares Bilder: ihre Entwicklung und ihre Funktionen im dramatischen Werk (Bonner Studien zur Englischen Philologie, Heft xxvii), Bonn, 1936. Miss Spurgeon's 'Leading Motives' (1930) and Shakespeare's Imagery (1935) were cited, and her views gently criticised, as perhaps not giving sufficient attention to dramatic aspects of the plays. See pp.13, 24ff.

to Miss Spurgeon's work, but also criticized her views, and had different methods and aims. The main theme of his book was Shakespeare's artistic development in the use of imagery, and he showed how 'ornamental' images, illustrative similes and word-play for its own sake were gradually replaced, partly in the history plays and wholly in the tragedies, by more intellectual, organic metaphors, closely knit to the thought of the play, and serving dramatic ends. Miss Spurgeon's classification, and the conventional definitions of an image were alien to his method of investigation of the development and varied uses of Shakespeare's imagery,<sup>1</sup> but in general he regarded pictorial metaphor and simile as imagery. Clemen stressed that the images are in plays, have therefore different functions from images in poetry, and must be related to their position in the text. He also observed some connection between imagery and character, notably in Richard III and Othello, the use of iterative imagery, and associative links by means of which one image grows out of another. The main functions of Shakespeare's poetic imagery, are, he

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<sup>1</sup> ibid. p.6: "The best method of examination for us is ... to meet each image as it comes along, without a pre-formed definition and without a scheme of classification, and then to ask what it means in its place, what content and what function it has there ..."



thought, to act as omens of the final catastrophe, and subtly to create atmosphere. Clemen's book included a historical survey of writings on Shakespeare's imagery<sup>1</sup> and a comparative estimate of the imagery of some of Shakespeare's forerunners in drama.

The scope of Clemen's book was thus different from that of Shakespeare's Imagery. Miss Spurgeon, attempting to be objective and basing her work on statistics, analysed iterative schemes of images in the plays; Clemen, content to be subjective, showed how Shakespeare's art of using imagery developed. In certain respects their views were similar; they both thought of images as metaphors and similes which evoke pictures, and Clemen subscribed to Miss Spurgeon's view, though in a limited number of cases, that imagery reveals Shakespeare's personal attitudes.<sup>2</sup> Clemen's approach differed in these important respects from that of Miss Spurgeon;

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<sup>1</sup> Clemen showed acquaintance with the work of Wilson Knight and Murry.

<sup>2</sup> Clemen recognised that artistic intention also governed the choice of image; see p.24 and p.251n; Miss Spurgeon's remark that the garden imagery of Richard II illustrates Shakespeare's love for country pursuits is cited (Shakespeare's Imagery, p.224). Clemen disagreed, and said that this imagery occurs because it is appropriate to the play.

it was remarkable for a keen sense of the dramatic functions of imagery and its relation to context, and for a recognition that imagery in drama has to fulfil a role distinct from that of imagery in other forms of poetry. Few other critics have paid attention to these aspects of the study of imagery.<sup>1</sup>

The discussion of imagery which has become very important in recent years as a critical approach to literature, and particularly to Shakespeare's plays, has been considerably influenced by the books of these two writers, and especially by Miss Spurgeon's work. Their definitions and methods are therefore very important, especially their concern with metaphor and simile, their tendency to pay attention to the subject-matter rather than the object-matter of images, and Miss Spurgeon's tendency to regard an image as a word-picture, appealing usually to the visual imagination.<sup>2</sup> Miss

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<sup>1</sup> Carpenter was a notable exception to the majority in recognising that drama demands different imagery from poetry, but only reached this view as a conclusion to his study, which was based on an analysis of imagery by subject-matter (see Metaphor and Simile, pp.170, 173). Clemen, on the other hand, started with the premise that "The species 'drama' demands something quite other from images than does the species 'epic'" (op.cit. p.7). Clemen ignored Shakespeare's Sonnets and other poems.

<sup>2</sup> Unlike Miss Spurgeon, Clemen, as noted, stressed the need to study imagery as organic in the plays.

Spurgeon amplified her views in replying to a letter of Kenneth Muir, who pointed out that though several writers had amply demonstrated Shakespeare's biblical knowledge, she had found few images, and had implied that Shakespeare had little interest in or knowledge of the Bible. In her reply Miss Spurgeon said that she had spoken only of images, not references; images she considered to arise from "the storehouse of the unconscious memory", whereas references were made deliberately:

the light thrown by the images of a writer on his knowledge and interests bears quite a different evidential value from that given by his deliberate references

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In a book which appeared in the same year as Shakespeare's Imagery, R. David put forward a thesis implicitly opposed to Miss Spurgeon's view. He regarded Shakespeare's use of bombast and puns as a deliberate contrivance for the purpose of expressing in a formal climax an emotional climax which could not be conveyed directly in words.<sup>2</sup> Bombast or extravagant imagery might also be used to suggest insincerity on the part

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<sup>1</sup> These letters appeared in T.L.S. for October 17th 1935 and December 14th 1935.

<sup>2</sup> The Janus of Poets, Cambridge, 1935. See pp.104, 107.

of a character, or to create a sense of high emotional tension; he found this last usage to be especially marked in Macbeth.<sup>1</sup> David thus emphasised the conscious use of imagery, examined the dramatic function of a particular kind of image, and foreshadowed certain aspects of Clemen's work. He observed that

Criticism to-day, studious of the poet's technical achievement, has managed to forget Shakspeare the philosopher and Shakspeare the psychologist; yet it still tends to split up the remainder into Shakspeare the poet and Shakspeare the dramatist.

2

Miss Spurgeon was interested mainly in Shakespeare the poet; Clemen and David in Shakespeare the dramatist as well. In this, the major respect in which Clemen and Miss Spurgeon differed, Miss Spurgeon has had a very much wider influence.

Her claim that imagery wells up from the unconscious mind, a point of view widely held, led to two further assumptions. The first is that there is some definable borderline between 'conscious' reference and 'unconscious' image; the second is that images throw light on an author's interests, whereas references do not. The

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp.155ff.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.163.

analysis of imagery in Miss Spurgeon's manner, by classifying the subject-matter according to its source, could, if these assumptions were true, be used to solve questions of disputed authorship. This has been attempted, notably with regard to The Revenger's Tragedy.<sup>1</sup> Una Ellis-Fermor examined and classified the imagery of this and its companion play The Atheist's Tragedy and concluded that both plays were written by Tourneur, whom she thought must have been a countryman, brought up on a farm. Unfortunately for this method of judging, Marco Mincoff independently analysed the imagery of the plays in the same way, and reached the conclusions that The Revenger's Tragedy was not written by Tourneur but by Middleton, and that Tourneur must have been a town-dweller with practically no interest in the country.<sup>2</sup>

It is appropriate to turn now from the influential practical criticism of Miss Spurgeon to two more general

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A suggestion to this effect had been made by Carpenter, op.cit. p.124. He noted that although the war imagery in Chapman's work might relate to experiences in his early life about which little is known, "Equally striking, however, is the comparative paucity of such similes in Ben Jonson, who is known to have seen such service".

<sup>2</sup> Una Ellis-Fermor, 'The Imagery of The Revenger's Tragedy and The Atheist's Tragedy' in E.L.R. xxx (July 1935), 289-301; Marco Mincoff, The Authorship of The Revenger's Tragedy, Sofia, 1939. The latter received Miss Ellis-Fermor's article only after completing his work, as he stated on p.85, adding the remark, "That the same method should lead to such conflicting results is rather a blow to any theories based on it".

books which appeared very soon after her work, and which have also had some influence on later critics. I. A. Richards in his The Philosophy of Rhetoric<sup>1</sup> pointed out how multifarious are the meanings of any word in any context, being affected by other words of similar sound and meaning. Hence, he said, the power of metaphor arises not from hidden resemblances between "vehicle" (subject-matter) and "tenor" (object-matter), but from the interaction of the two, giving a deeper and more varied meaning to each than either possesses individually. He claimed also that images need not appeal to the visual or any other sense, but demand primarily an intellectual awareness of their implications.<sup>2</sup> Although differing widely from Miss Spurgeon in asserting that it is the interaction of the terms which gives strength and meaning to metaphor, and in denying the 'word-picture' concept of an image, Richards gave support to her views in one respect. For like William Faxon, whose book he cited with approval, he considered "our freedom to fill in" connections in poetry to be "a main source of its powers";<sup>3</sup> Miss Spurgeon used this freedom

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<sup>1</sup> New York, 1936.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 127ff.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 125.

in examining and interpreting images in isolation from their context. Other critics, influenced by Eppson and Richards, have found obscure and sometimes inappropriate meanings in images through considering the free connotations they evoke in themselves, rather than the meaning directed by their context.

D. G. James criticised the theories of Richards in Scepticism and Poetry, and rejected his distinction between emotive language (poetry) and scientific language (prose), claiming that "so far as its intention goes, poetic language is no more 'emotive' than scientific language".<sup>1</sup> The simile, he said, develops and elaborates by giving equivalence to two things, but metaphor identifies and is most effective when "the sense of equivalence and comparison is lost, and a single object grasped in its unity". The "main use" of imagery is thus "the expression of imaginative idea or object", and "the aim of poetry is never to create emotion; its aim is to convey an imaginative idea or object".<sup>2</sup> Whereas Richards denied any necessary sensory appeal in imagery, James denied any necessary

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<sup>1</sup> London, 1937, p.30.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, pp.100, 73, 30.

emotive appeal, and both arrived at an intellectual view of imagery, recognising its power to convey meanings and ideas. In contrast to Miss Spurgeon, who was concerned with what is variable and subjective in imagery, the imaginative picture evoked, they stressed the more intellectual aspect, the imaginative idea conveyed. However, Richards allowed free and personal associations to be used in interpretation, and James denied that there was any distinction between dramatic and non-dramatic poetry, and treated plays simply as poetry. In these differing ways they lent support to Miss Spurgeon's practice, for she freely interpreted images in isolation from context, and treated Shakespeare's plays as poetry.

#### (iv) The Influence of Miss Spurgeon

The influence of Miss Spurgeon's work has extended far beyond writings on Shakespeare's imagery, and indeed, so many general critical writings of recent years give some account of the imagery of Shakespeare or other authors, that it would be difficult to discuss all that has been said. The direct influence of Miss Spurgeon has been apparent chiefly in two ways. Firstly, a number of critics have been inspired by her work to extend her analysis of Shakespeare's imagery, or to discuss that of other authors in the same way. Secondly, her work has provoked much criticism, and it has been common for writers attempting a fresh approach to imagery to take



Shakespeare's Imagery as their starting point.

Some attempts have been made, based on Miss Spurgeon's methods, to draw biographical data from a poet's writings. K. Muir and S. O'Loughlin wrote a biography of Shakespeare based on the plays and poems, and<sup>1</sup> frankly drawing biographical inferences from the imagery. Like Miss Spurgeon, they believed that the subject-matter of images reveals Shakespeare's personality, and they constructed, largely on this basis, a story of love, friendship, disillusionment and finally restoration to health of mind. They observed, as did Clemen, that the imagery of the early plays is largely decorative, and that Romeo and Juliet is the first play in which imagery plays an integral part. Of Richard III they complained that there was still a "lack of vital imagery", which showed that "the poet's personality was not deeply engaged", as it was to be in the later plays; here the imagery gave "little clue to Shakespeare's unconscious conception of the<sup>2</sup> play". In this respect they adopted Miss Spurgeon's view, but they sometimes differed from her in what they

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<sup>1</sup> The Voyage to Illyria, London, 1937.

<sup>2</sup> ibid., p.90.

considered to be the dominant image in a play, and occasionally were critical of Shakespeare's Imagery. For instance, Miss Spurgeon interpreted the imagery relating to clothing in Macbeth as showing that Shakespeare conceived Macbeth as a small man placed in circumstances too big for him; this they pointed out "conflicts ... violently with the conscious meaning<sup>1</sup> of the play".

More recently a similar line of investigation has been followed, but less convincingly, by two Shakespearian critics. William Bliss used references and images in the plays to account for the unexplained years of Shakespeare's life; these, he claimed, were spent on two deep-sea voyages, and included a shipwreck, travel on a ship called the 'Tiger', and setting out from Milford Haven, since these are referred to in various plays. The book is a mixture of serious and humorous assertions, some penetrating, some giving a "counterblast to commentators", as the sub-title puts it. An example of the second kind of assertion is his suggestion that Shakespeare must have been a murderer<sup>2</sup> because he sympathised with murderers. A year later

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<sup>1</sup> ibid., p.196.

<sup>2</sup> The Real Shakespeare: A Counterblast to Commentators, London, 1947. See especially Chapters 4, 5 and 9, pp.66-117 and 207-227.

Frank O'Connor published The Road to Stratford, a biography of Shakespeare based largely on developments in his style and imagery. In contrast to Muir and O'Loughlin, he found that a "storm of misanthropy blows in the tragedies, continues and is intensified throughout the last plays, and that these plays, gloomy and pessimistic, indicate a decline in Shakespeare's powers."<sup>1</sup> Although he made some interesting remarks on style, O'Connor's work is not very convincing, and sometimes he contradicted himself.<sup>2</sup> A biographical interpretation of some of Shakespeare's imagery has been made by other critics.<sup>3</sup>

The imagery of other authors has been explored with the same end in view. M. A. Rugoff, adopting Miss Spurgeon's view that an image is an unwitting disclosure of a poet's mind, of "what interests appear to lie

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<sup>1</sup> London, 1948; see especially pp.101, 143.

<sup>2</sup> See for example p.117 where a collaborator of Shakespeare is discovered, "a man who did not know the theatre", but who turns out to be a "stage director" on p.127.

<sup>3</sup> See for instance Sergeant Shakespeare by Duff Cooper, London, 1949. Baconians have attempted to show that in seeking Shakespeare Miss Spurgeon really discovered Bacon, cf. E. F. Haggood and W. S. Melsome, 'Professor Spurgeon and her Images' in Baconiana xxv (July 1941), 213-28, but she had already prepared for such an attack in her 'The Use of Imagery by Shakespeare and Bacon' in R.E.S. ix (October 1933), 385-96, drawing attention to differences.



closest to his heart", and using her methods of classification, analysed the imagery of Donne's writings in an endeavour to find out something about the man.<sup>1</sup> Just as Miss Spurgeon failed to add anything of significance to our knowledge of Shakespeare, so Ragoff added little or nothing to the information which may be acquired simply by reading Donne's works. A study of the sources of the imagery in Tennyson's early poems has been made with the aim of learning something about his boyhood,<sup>2</sup> about the "personality of Tennyson in his youth".<sup>3</sup> More recently Theodore Banks has analysed Milton's imagery in the belief that it would

reveal the writer's fields of interest, his preoccupations and beliefs, his likes and dislikes, his knowledge or ignorance, his experience or lack of it, in short, his personality. 8

He related the imagery to the known facts of Milton's

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<sup>1</sup> Donne's Imagery: A Study in Creative Sources. New York, 1939. The quotation is on pp.17-18.

<sup>2</sup> W. D. Paden. Tennyson in Egypt: A Study of the Imagery in his Earlier Work, University of Kansas, 1942. The quotation is on p.16.

<sup>3</sup> Milton's Imagery. New York, 1950, p.xii.

life, and sometimes drew some strange conclusions to  
accord with the facts,<sup>1</sup> but in spite of his very  
detailed examination of what "reveals Milton the man",  
he admitted that he had not changed the accepted  
picture of Milton, only perhaps added some new "lights  
and shadows".<sup>2</sup> Similar but less elaborate studies have  
been made of the imagery of Dr. Johnson, Sir Walter  
Scott,<sup>3</sup> and other authors.

At least one full-length study of the poetic  
imagery of a dramatic author other than Shakespeare has  
been made, Marion B. Smith's Marlowe's Imagery and the  
Marlowe Canon.<sup>4</sup> Miss Smith paid tribute to Miss  
Spurgeon's work, and also cited many other writers on  
imagery. Believing that a study of imagery would reveal

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He tried to show that after his blindness Milton became  
more sensitive to sound, and checked references to and  
images of sight and sound, finding 25 relating to sight,  
4 to sound in the four longest early poems (Cornus, Lycides,  
L'Allegro and Il Penseroso), 11 to sight and 5 to sound  
in the later poems (Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained and  
Samson Agonistes). There was one early sound image, 5  
late images. He ignored the relative numbers of lines  
in these two groups of poems in claiming that Milton  
"became more conscious of the sounds of nature" after his  
blindness (p.133).

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, pp.xiii, xii.

<sup>3</sup> See C. S. Emdin, 'Dr. Johnson and Imagery' in *F.E.S.*  
*Rev Series 1* (January 1950), 23-38; Christabel F. Fiske,  
Epic Suggestion in the Haverley Novels, New Haven, 1940.

<sup>4</sup> Philadelphia, 1940. The analyses of the imagery of  
Tournour's plays by Una Ellis-Fermor and Marco Mincoff  
have been noticed, see above, p.45.

the workings of the poet's mind, she adopted Miss Spurgeon's scheme of classification in preference to others because of its completeness; and though she recognised that "Elizabethan imagery" was in large measure "a consciously cultivated art", she thought that

When the survey is complete, however, one is dealing largely with the product of spontaneous thought.

1

Like Miss Spurgeon she classified each image under one heading, and provided statistics. She did not succeed in discovering anything very notable about Marlowe, only that

it is extraordinary to what extent Marlowe's imagery reflects the sort of personality we would expect to belong to such a man as this.

2

In all these studies of imagery Miss Spurgeon's method of classification was used, and the subject-matter alone considered in relation to a sensory source. It was generally assumed that images reflect the author's unconscious mind, and that by examining the 'content' of images the critic would discover a poet's 'character'.<sup>3</sup> The discouraging results of these studies indicates perhaps that the examination of the subject-matter alone

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<sup>1</sup> ibid., pp.9, 13.

<sup>2</sup> ibid., p.16.

<sup>3</sup> Banks, op.cit., pp.xi-xii.

is not sufficient. The fact that K. Muir and E. K. Chambers were able justly to criticise Miss Spurgeon's work on the grounds that she portrayed a Shakespeare ignorant of the Bible and the theatre, although the plays contain many biblical references and are pervaded with stage terms used literally and figuratively, points to the limitations of her method, and to the importance of the object-matter of images and simple reference in the study of an author's knowledge and interests.<sup>1</sup>

Miss Spurgeon's work has also occasioned much criticism, and has afforded a basis for the exploration of imagery by later writers. Una Ellis-Fermor has supported Miss Spurgeon's views, in practice and in theory.<sup>2</sup> Her illuminating Jacobean Drama, a survey of all the major dramatists of the period, with special

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<sup>1</sup> For Muir's letter, see earlier, p.43. E. K. Chambers, 'William Shakespeare: An Epilogue' (1943) in Shakespearean Gleanings, Oxford, 1944, pp.35-56. There was hostile criticism of Miss Spurgeon's attempt to discover facts about Shakespeare in reviews of Shakespeare's Imagery; of the reviews by Mario Praz, English Studies, xviii (August 1936), 177-81, and E. T. Hastings, S.A.B., xi (July 1936), 131-41, both of whom pointed out that, in the words of Hastings, "When all is said and done, Shakespeare's Imagery tells us little about Shakespeare that we did not know, and it is full of both trivial and dubious references" (p.131).

<sup>2</sup> London, 1936.

reference to imagery and image-patterns, owed much to Shakespeare's Imagery. A year later (1937) appeared her Some Recent Research in Shakespeare's Imagery,<sup>1</sup> in which she reviewed the books of Wells, Murry, Brown, Kolbe, Knight and Miss Holmes, remarking that all these, unlike Miss Spurgeon, were subjective in their approach to imagery, working by impression, not by statistics. Their work therefore was less valuable than that of Miss Spurgeon, whose method was objective and scientific. Miss Ellis-Fermor said that Clemen's work was a mixture of subjective and objective criticism, and although his consideration of imagery in relation to dramatic setting was "a principle of high value",<sup>2</sup> it was ultimately subjective, and not based on a catalogue and classification of all the imagery, as was Shakespeare's Imagery. She thought this subjective approach a weakness, since it allows the critic to find what he wants and ignore other evidence. Therefore she praised Miss Spurgeon's statistical method, and believed exhaustive classification of imagery to be necessary; in her view images should be examined for their "subject" (subject-matter), for themes prompting imagery (object-matter), and for the relation

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<sup>1</sup> London, for The Shakespeare Association, 1937.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p.36.



between the two. The greatest danger in such a study is that the critic may allow

the inevitable intrusion of the subjective into what ought, if it is to be valid, to be a rigidly scientific procedure 1

It may be a little absurd to propose a "rigidly scientific procedure" in any method of literary criticism, especially when admitting that the intrusion of a subjective attitude is inevitable. Nevertheless, Miss Ellis-Fermor offered reasons for believing Miss Spurgeon's method to be more valuable than those of other notable writers on poetic imagery. This was important, for in this pamphlet she was the first to make a critical review of writings on imagery, and to offer some guidance in methods of examining imagery. As noted above, Miss Ellis-Fermor called for a study of the object-matter, and though she has continued to praise Miss Spurgeon's pioneer work, her recognition of the complex nature of images had led her to stress other factors, in particular their dramatic functions. 2

Miss Ellis-Fermor has not been alone in her estimate

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ibid., p.14.

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See 'The Poet's Imagery' in The Listener, 28 July 1949, where she said of the study of imagery in drama, "... as a branch of aesthetics, it will, I think, prove fruitful only in so far as the dramatic function of images is kept unwaveringly before the critic's mind".

of the value of Miss Spurgeon's work.<sup>1</sup> However, Shakespeare's Imagery has been severely criticised. L. H. Hornstein drew attention to logical faults in Miss Spurgeon's arguments, pointing out firstly that she assumed Shakespeare to be objective in creating character, and subjective in making images, which arise from the unconscious mind; secondly that many images from which Miss Spurgeon deduced facts about Shakespeare are common to many authors of the period or derived from proverbs and therefore of doubtful evidential value; and thirdly that there are few biblical images, but many references which Miss Spurgeon ignored, and that inferences drawn from imagery and reference must frequently conflict in this way.<sup>2</sup> Finally he criticised the basis of her method:

Speculation on imagery rests on a two-fold assumption that the image is a true indication of interest (and always direct observation, unless the creature doesn't exist, e.g. a mermaid), and the absence of an image is an indication of lack of knowledge or lack of interest.

Hornstein's attack was directed chiefly against the first

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1 See S. E. Hyman, 'The Critical Achievement of Caroline Spurgeon' in Kenyon Review, x (Winter, 1948), 92-108. Attention is drawn in this article to the debt owed by the 'new' critics to Miss Spurgeon's work. of. also the long chapter headed 'Le Langage' in H. Fluchère, Shakespeare: Dramaturge Elisabéthain, Cahiers du Sud, 1948, pp.189-233.

2 'The Analysis of Imagery: A Critique of Literary Method' in P.M.L.A., lvii (September 1942), 638-53. The quotation is on p.651.

part of Miss Spurgeon's book; while allowing that imagery might show the range of an author's imaginative interests, he thought it wrong to draw inferences about the author himself on the assumptions that images have a direct basis in physical experience, and derive from the unconscious mind. Kenneth Muir has criticised Shakespeare's Imagery on similar grounds, observing also "how unprofitable it is to consider the imagery of the play in isolation", and the desirability of classifying some images under more than one heading.<sup>1</sup> The implications of the arguments of both Horststein and Muir are that imagery may be as consciously employed as references, and that if there is any borderline between what is conscious and unconscious on an author's part, it is impossible to discover.

Several critics have started off from Miss Spurgeon's principles in their examination of texts. J. C. Maxwell rejected Miss Spurgeon's definition of an image, and used the terms 'image', 'allusion' and 'reference' indiscriminately in his discussion of Coriolanus.<sup>2</sup> On this basis of counting he found the

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<sup>1</sup> 'The Future of Shakespeare' in Penguin New Writing, xviii (July 1946), 101-21. The quotation is on p.108.

<sup>2</sup> 'Animal Imagery in Coriolanus' in M.L.R., xlii (October 1947), 417-21.

dominant image and word theme in the play to relate to animals, and not as Miss Spurgeon had found, to the body and sickness. 3. Kliger objected to her isolation of imagery from its context, her concern only with the material differences between the sources of iterative groups, for, he said,

The real significance of Shakespeare's imagery is not that it differs materially but formally as part of an organic system of relationships inhering in the tragic form.

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He went on to examine the sun imagery in Richard II. pointing out its close connections, ignored by Miss Spurgeon, with other groups of images. In an examination of the same play, P. A. Jorgensen observed a type of image, a "study of patterned motion", in the contrasted effects of rising and falling, not noticed by Miss Spurgeon. In addition to the poetic images he took into account some of the stage effects in the play, such as Richard's descent from the walls to the base court of Flint Castle.<sup>2</sup> H. T. Price noted a few more

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1 'The Sun Imagery in Richard II.' in S.P., xlv (April 1948), 196-202. The quotation is on p.196.

2 'Vertical Patterns in Richard II.' in S.A.B., xxiii (July 1948), 119-34. This theme of the rise and fall of kings has also been studied in R. Chapman 'The Wheel of Fortune in Shakespeare's Historical Plays' in R.E.S. New Series, i (January 1950), 1-7.

inferences about Shakespeare which might be drawn from his imagery, his use of conventional images and proverbs, and his deliberate use of rhetoric as a mark of character.<sup>1</sup>

More recently a fresh examination of the imagery of Romeo and Juliet has been made by E. C. Pettet, who adopted Miss Spurgeon's method of approach, but observed also the way in which the fate of the lovers is anticipated in the imagery.<sup>2</sup>

Another recent article by J. L. Jackson was devoted to showing that the famous recurrent linkage of dogs, fawning and candy in Shakespeare's plays did not necessarily express his especial hatred of flattery, for

while one must agree that Miss Spurgeon's series of images is frequently recognizable in the plays, it is more likely to be grouping of commonplaces on flattery than a reflection of Shakespeare's own experience.<sup>3</sup>

The critical works discussed in this section indicate the extent of Miss Spurgeon's direct influence.

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<sup>1</sup> See 'Shakespeare as a Critic' in P.Q., xx (July 1941), 390-9 and 'Shakespeare's Imagery' in Quarterly Review (Michigan Alumnus), 1 (May 1944), 207-20.

<sup>2</sup> 'The Imagery of Romeo and Juliet' in English, viii (Autumn 1950), 121-6. Some further comments on Pettet's discussion of star imagery have been made by Roy Walker in his 'Shakespeare's Star Imagery' in English, viii (Spring 1951), 217-8.

<sup>3</sup> 'Shakespeare's Dog-and-Sugar Imagery and the Friendship Tradition' in Shakespeare Quarterly, 1 (October 1950), 260-3. The quotation is on p.260.

especially on Shakespearian criticism. It is notable that even the writers most hostile to her have attacked her work principally on two counts, objecting to the drawing of biographical inferences, and to the narrow definition of imagery she used. Her concentration on poetic imagery and analysis according to subject-matter has remained the most usual approach, and although some Shakespearian critics have extended her definition to include references, only one among those discussed, Jorgensen, has taken stage effects into account. Her methods of critical analysis can be applied equally well to poetry and drama,<sup>1</sup> since she ignored the dramatic context and function of images and the Shakespearian critics discussed above have tended to examine the plays as poetry.

#### (v) The Later Practical Criticism

The critical works remaining to be considered may

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<sup>1</sup> Miss Spurgeon's terms of reference have passed into common critical usage in relation to poetry; see for example S. C. Wilcox, 'Imagery, Ideas and Design in Shelley's Ode to the West Wind' in S.P., xlvii (October 1950), 634-49; F. Kermode, 'The Private Imagery of Henry Vaughan' in R.E.S., 1 New Series (July 1950), 206-25.

be divided into three groups, firstly a number of writings on Shakespeare and other poets which have a common approach through language or imagery, secondly the writings of the school of 'new' critics in America and their adherents in Britain, and thirdly, a number of works concerned more generally with language, rhetoric and the nature and functions of imagery. Most of these works owe something to one or more of the early critics, in particular to Wells, Kolbe, Wilson Knight and Miss Spurgeon, a debt sometimes acknowledged, but no other critic has had such a pervasive influence as Miss Spurgeon.

Of the first group, practical critics, some have devoted their attention to words, or extended the meaning of imagery to include words. In their little book Shakespeare Survey, W. Empson and G. Garrett published several essays on the use of individual words in certain of Shakespeare's plays, for example, 'dog' in Timon of Athens and 'honesty' in Othello. Empson sought to show that these words are used with several meanings, giving them a complex and rich significance. He pointed out

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Shakespeare Survey, London, 1937. Empson's essays, 'Timon's Dog' and 'The Best Policy' were previously published in Life and Letters Today for Summer and Winter, 1936.

that 'dog', considered by Miss Spurgeon (and several other critics, including Murry, Clemen and Rylands) to have unpleasant or disgusting associations for Shakespeare, is used in Timon of Athens not only as a term of abuse, but also as a term of praise. Empson has maintained his interest in this topic, and has recently published a long essay called 'Fool in Lear', "from a forthcoming book about the structure of complex words".<sup>1</sup> The exact meaning of 'honesty' in Othello in relation to Elizabethan usage<sup>2</sup> has also been the subject of an essay by P. A. Jorgensen.

Studies of the cumulative effect or iterative use of words are perhaps more important in relation to imagery than these essays on the special uses of individual words. R. E. Saleski, apparently inspired by Miss Spurgeon's work, analysed the frequency of occurrence of certain words occurring in the plays of five Elizabethan dramatists, in the hope that

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<sup>1</sup> in Sewanee Review, lvii (Spring 1949), 177-214.

<sup>2</sup> "Honesty" in Othello in S.P., xlvii (October 1950), 557-67. J. W. Draper has some articles on similar topics; cf. his study of the relationship between the use of the word 'flattery', and the appearance of the thing itself as a dramatic theme in 'Flattery, a Shakespearean Tragic Theme', P.Q., xvii (July 1938), 240-50. cf. also John Paterson's 'The Word in Hamlet' in Shakespeare Quarterly, ii (January 1951), 47-55, an article mainly on the use of the word 'word'.



By comparing his [any author's] use of words with that of the group around him we could pick out his individuality and conformity of thought.

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His results were not very illuminating, serving only to show that authors differ in their use of words. Two years later, in 1941, P. V. Kreider published his full-length study of Repetition in Shakespeare's Plays.<sup>2</sup> in which, extending the work of Kolbe, he set out to show that repetition in plot, characterisation and language is a very important feature of the plays. He discussed at length the recurrent motifs of sleep in Macbeth, sight in King Lear, and nature references in As You Like It, and made valuable comments on the way in which these motifs help to give unity of tone and effect to these plays. However, he concentrated attention on recurrences of isolated words, and claimed, for instance, that the concept of sleep is important in Macbeth because in that play Shakespeare summed up all his ideas about sleep, which had been developed throughout other plays; he said

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<sup>1</sup> 'Supernatural Agents in Christian Imagery: Word Studies in Elizabethan Dramatists' in J.E.C.P., xxxviii (1939), 431-9. The quotation is on p.431.

<sup>2</sup> Princeton, 1941.

in Macbeth, Shakespeare augments his poetic power by concentrating a body of ideas developed in a number of other plays. 1

He thus considered Macbeth as if it were part of a long poem comprising all Shakespeare's work; he did not observe the linkages between sleep and its opposite, wakefulness, emphasised by iterative words and images, or the way in which the various iterative schemes are interfused in the total effect of the play. A. A. Stephenson was also concerned with Shakespeare's ideas in his study of Cymbeline; he found a single class of imagery connected 2 with worth, value or estimation pervasive in the play. This, he claimed, indicates Shakespeare's preoccupation "with the idea of ideal perfection, an absolute value", and it is because this idea is too general and abstract for poetry that the play is static and unequal. These three writers were thus all interested in Shakespeare's use of words and images as a conscious expression of his ideas, and the last two, Kreider and Stephenson, tended to explain plays in terms of abstract ideas, an approach related to that of Wilson Knight and the 'new' critics.

Andrey Yoder, perhaps influenced by earlier work on

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1  
ibid., p.194.

2  
'The Significance of Cymbeline' in Scrutiny, x (April 1942), 329-33. The quotation is on p.334.

Shakespeare's use of analogies between beasts and man,<sup>1</sup> collected all references to animals in the plays, compared the figurative and direct uses of these terms, their distribution among the plays and the individual characters.<sup>2</sup> Her statistical method was similar to that of Miss Spurgeon, except that she examined all references as well as analogies. The main theme of her book was the relation of this animal imagery to character portrayal, and she had some interesting comments on the way in which a growing unpleasantness in animal analogies accompanies the deterioration of the characters of Macbeth and Falstaff in 2 Henry IV. The way in which other authors use words has also been studied. Josephine Miles published three studies relating mainly to Wordsworth and other nineteenth century authors under the collective title of The Vocabulary of Poetry.<sup>3</sup> All were based on statistical

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<sup>1</sup> Theodore Spencer in Shakespeare and the Nature of Man. New York, 1942, discussed Shakespeare's use of beast analogies in the tragedies; his views were criticised by G. G. Taylor, 'Shakespeare's Use of the Idea of the Beast in Man' in S.P., xlii (July 1945), 530-43. A special study of 'The Beast Theme in Shakespeare's "Timon"' has been made by Willard Farnham (University of California Publications in English, xiv (1943), 49-56.

<sup>2</sup> Animal Analogy in Shakespeare's Character Portrayal. New York, 1947.

<sup>3</sup> University of California Publications in English, xii (1946).

analysis of certain aspects of vocabulary, and in the last, an examination of the change in poetic emphasis as revealed in the use of favourite adjectives by authors ranging from Chaucer to Auden, she claimed that quantitative analysis could be important and that adjectives were more amenable to such analysis than

for example, the 'image', which is now, especially in the wake of Caroline Spurgeon's Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us, being variously defined yet often treated as countable. 1

The possibility of solving authorship problems by an analysis of vocabulary has been explored by G. U. Yule, 2 a mathematician who has worked out a statistical theory for the purpose.

Although Stephenson examined metaphors in a single play, Cymbeline, and Miss Yoder studied all references and images relating to a single theme, animals, in Shakespeare's plays, in most of the critical works

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1  
ibid., p.309. For other works on words in poetry cf. the same author's The Primary Language of Poetry in the 1640's, and The Primary Language of Poetry in the 1740's and 1840's, University of California Publications in English, xix, (1948-50,) also F. B. Snyder, 'Wordsworth's Favourite Words' in J.E.O.P., xxi (1923), 253-6; Ellen Leyburn, 'Recurrent Words in The Prelude', in E.L.H., xvi (December 1949), 284-98; A. Hart, 'The Vocabularies of Shakespeare's Plays' in R.E.S., xix (April 1943), 128-40, and 'The Growth of Shakespeare's Vocabulary' in R.E.S., xix (July 1943), 242-54.

2  
The Statistical Study of Literary Vocabulary, Cambridge, 1944. The book contains an analysis of the vocabularies used by Bunyan and Macaulay.

considered above, the study of words or references has been pursued exclusively as a topic separate from the study of imagery - a principle which Miss Spurgeon would have approved. Some critics have studied references and imagery together. H. Granville-Barker has devoted sections of his Prefaces to various plays of Shakespeare to language and imagery. In his preface to Hamlet he acknowledged Miss Spurgeon's work and said that the play is an "edifice of related imagery", but suggested that recognition of image-patterns by an audience might be at most half-conscious; in that to Othello he noted the iteration of significant words, and the way in which imagery is fitted to character; in that to Coriolanus he observed Shakespeare's use of what he called the "dynamic phrase", simple, non-figurative statements into which "the actor is to pack the effect of a cumulated mass of thought and feeling". Here he suggested a way in which the effect of imagery is carried over into non-figurative passages. Like Granville-Barker, Moody Prior

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e.g. Prefaces to Shakespeare: Third Series, Hamlet, London 1937; Fourth Series, Othello, London 1945; Fifth Series, Coriolanus, London 1947. The quotations are on p.211 (Hamlet) and p.179 (Coriolanus).

stressed the primary importance of the dramatic action, and the absurdity of isolating imagery as though it contained the whole of a play's significance.<sup>1</sup> However, although critical of other writers on imagery, of Miss Spurgeon for not relating imagery to action, of Wilson Knight for ignoring dramatic action and looking at Shakespeare's plays as one poetic vision, and of Clemen for associating images only with character, not with a play's total action, Prior achieved little more than they did. He surveyed English tragedy from Corboeno to the present day, discussing imagery in much the same way as Miss Spurgeon, with reference to its subject-matter. He noted the repetition of key words in Tamburlaine, and made some interesting comments on the plays of Webster and Tourneur; but his analyses of the two plays of Shakespeare he selected are disappointing, even though he took a broader view than Miss Spurgeon, discussing the storm and allusions to it in King Lear, the significance of the word 'nature', and the reciprocal relationships in the plot, as well as the imagery. His work is important because he recognised the connections

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<sup>1</sup> The Language of Tragedy, New York, 1947.

between poetic imagery and other factors in Elizabethan drama.

In the same year (1947), R. D. Altick published a long article on the imagery of Richard II. He recognised the importance of iterative words, and said that when these words evoke a vivid response they become iterative imagery, and each of the image-motifs represents one of the dominant ideas in the play.<sup>1</sup> He thus used the word 'image' in an inclusive sense to mean "metaphorical as well as 'picture-making' but non-figurative language". Like Miss Spurgeon, he identified word and image themes by statistical study in general:

A given word or group of related words is called a 'theme' (a) if Bartlett's Concordance shows a definite numerical preponderance for Richard II, or (b) if the word or group of words is so closely related to one of the fundamental ideas of the play that it is of greater importance than the comparative numerical frequency would imply.

2

By combining the methods of Kolbe and Miss Spurgeon, Altick produced a fuller and more informative study of this play than either of his predecessors, but like them he was

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<sup>1</sup> 'Symphonic Imagery in Richard II' in P.M.L.A., lxii (June 1947), 339-65.

2

ibid., p.341n.

interested in iterative themes in themselves, not in relation to action, and he recognized himself the arbitrary nature of his statistical method of selecting themes, and how liable it was to be misleading.<sup>1</sup> The most noteworthy of his findings were that metaphorical language tends to be concentrated at emotional climaxes in Richard II. and that important passages are prepared for by previous hints of the imagery which is to dominate them.

Some critics have sought an interpretation of Shakespeare's plays in studying imagery and, to some extent, iterative words. The most elaborate work is that of Roy Walker, who made a scene by scene analysis of Macbeth writing a textual commentary, and paying much attention to imagery and repeated words in his presentation of

an imaginative interpretation of the tragedy, mainly through its poetic symbolism, in which is discerned purpose and pattern.

2

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1  
Thus he observed significantly that the word 'blood' occurs less often in Macbeth than in the history plays, and yet has a richer and more vital meaning in that play. He explained this denial of his own statistical method by saying that in Macbeth force is given to the word not by the "frequency with which it is spoken, but rather the intrinsic magnificence of the passages in which it appears and the fact that in this play it has but one significance - the literal one" (p.345).

2

The Time is Free. London, 1949, p.ix.



He made many brilliant observations, but also found many doubtful meanings and associations in images; he found biblical images and allusions particularly important, and for him the play was "profoundly impregnated with the central tragedy of the Christian myth".<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the most important feature of his book is that, unlike Miss Spurgeon and Wilson Knight, by whose work he was strongly influenced, Walker paid attention to the symbolic importance of stage directions and effects, and their linkage with imagery. This, however, was really incidental to the main theme of the book, an imaginative analysis of the text. His earlier book on Hamlet<sup>2</sup> was much less concerned with imagery than The Time is Free, being devoted largely to a discussion of plot and action.

Like Walker, S. L. Bethell was preoccupied with Christian symbolism in Shakespeare's plays, and discovered religious meanings or associations in numerous passages. For instance, Dion's description of the sacrifice at the temple of the Oracle at Delphos in The Winter's Tale "sounds", for Bethell, "almost

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<sup>1</sup> ibid., p.55.

<sup>2</sup> The Time is out of Joint, London, 1948.

like a description of the Mass".<sup>1</sup> This is perhaps true, but he was less justified in asserting, because in a similar way he found a constant association of Cordelia with Christian doctrine, that King Lear is a kind of Christian allegory, showing "the foreshadowing of Christ in pure natures before His coming". His final estimation of King Lear was rather remarkable:

Lear is more like a poetic treatise in mystical theology than a 'portrait' by one of our psychological novelists. 2

To most readers the play bears little resemblance to either; but Bethell has not been alone in this tendency to regard the plays as treatises or exemplifications of ideas.<sup>3</sup> More recently John F. Danby has sought for the theme and meaning of King Lear in uses of the word 'nature' and its cognates.<sup>4</sup> Although he paid some attention to imagery and iterative words, his main concern was with an

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<sup>1</sup> The Winter's Tale: A Study, London, 1947, p.84.

<sup>2</sup> Shakespeare and the Popular Dramatic Tradition, London, 1944, pp.60, 80.

<sup>3</sup> In this his work is related both to that of Wilson Knight and L. C. Knights, and to that of the 'new' critics.

<sup>4</sup> Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature: A Study of King Lear, London, 1949.

allegorical significance to be found in the play.

In the same year appeared Shakespeare's World of Images by D. Stauffer. The author's main aim was to discover Shakespeare's "moral convictions", and discussion of imagery was incidental to this purpose.<sup>1</sup>

A few studies of Shakespeare's imagery have been made for limited and special purposes. E. A. Armstrong<sup>2</sup> in his Shakespeare's Imagination examined certain groups of related images, and showed how certain ideas, e.g. beetle-birds-night-death, apparently associated in Shakespeare's mind while the early plays were being written, tend to recur in association, the presence of one calling forth the others. Adopting Miss Spurgeon's definition of an image, he found that these associated ideas recur in the imagery often throughout Shakespeare's work, and form what he calls 'image-clusters'. It is perhaps significant that all the clusters he examined are small; even these have associations with the "supreme categories" of life (love) and death, and with "Master Images such as Pride or Darkness", which "cense the image clusters

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Shakespeare's World of Images: The Development of his Moral Ideas. New York, 1949, p.19.

<sup>2</sup>

London, 1946. Armstrong's work had been anticipated by Walter Whiter in 1794, see above, p.2.

to intersect and interpenetrate".<sup>1</sup> He was possibly dealing with the smallest, most curious and most noticeable groups of a mass of idea-associations; the larger associations, such as the linkage of light with love, darkness with death and evil, are perhaps fundamental to humanity, and are certainly common to many authors. It is probable therefore, as Armstrong believed, that the clusters he dealt with are peculiar to Shakespeare, and may be useful in determining a disputed authorship. Unlike Miss Spurgeon, he was wary of drawing conclusions about Shakespeare's personality, and believed that his imagery represents

every stage between what we can presume to be conscious association to what we can as probably presume to be achieved unwittingly.<sup>2</sup>

Armstrong also noted "streamy associations" occurring in single contexts, associations perhaps made by Shakespeare during the act of writing, such as the word "cannon" in Hamlet followed a line or two later by "canon 'gainst self-slaughter" (I, ii, 126-32). The most interesting remarks of Edith Sitwell in her A Notebook on William Shakespeare were on a similar aspect of Shakespeare's imagery, the relationship between the

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 41, 81.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

sound value and the mood of various passages, the use<sup>1</sup> of assonance and dissonance. Though suggestive, her comments were haphazard and fragmentary.

The relationship between character and imagery in Othello Macbeth and Hamlet has been studied by M. M. Morelov in an essay foreshadowed to some extent by earlier writers.<sup>2</sup> He succeeded in showing that the major characters in these plays have their own individual imagery to a considerable degree. He found Othello's typical imagery to be lofty and poetic, Iago's low and bestial, Macbeth's splendid and fantastic and Hamlet's realistic and concrete. His conclusion that "the study of imagery facilitates, as we see, a closer knowledge of the characters"<sup>3</sup> may seem obvious, since it is only through the language that we have any knowledge of them, but his work is of considerable value. He related imagery to character.

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<sup>1</sup> London, 1948.

<sup>2</sup> 'The Individualization of Shakespeare's Characters through Imagery' in Shakespeare Survey 2, Cambridge 1949, pp.83-106. Suggestions regarding the relationship of imagery to character had been made by Granville-Barker and Una Ellis-Fermor, and see especially H. T. Price, 'Shakespeare's Imagery' in Quarterly Review (Michigan Alumnus), 1 (May 1944), 207-20. He found that Shakespeare "does not waste a fine figure on a dull man. He confers beautiful figures on a character as if they were patents of nobility" (p.211). Cf. also the work of Miss Yoder discussed above.

<sup>3</sup> ibid., p.93.

to the plays as drama, not as poems, or as a system of abstract ideas; and he discovered some interesting facts, such as the way in which Othello becomes contaminated, almost possessed by Iago after the line "Chaos is come again" (III,iii,92) and from that point begins to speak in mean or bestial imagery.

The Shakespearian criticism examined in this section has been concerned mainly with three lines of study. Several critics discussed Shakespeare's use of words, and a few, notably Altick and Prior, extended Miss Spurgeon's strict definition of imagery to include iterative words. Some critics have been interested in finding ideas in, or sometimes imposing ideas on the plays, and have discussed poetic imagery for this purpose. Finally, a few have examined special aspects of Shakespeare's imagery, image-clusters, and the relation of imagery to character. Five of these critics, Miss Yoder, Granville-Barker, Prior, Walker and Morozov have related imagery in some measure to action or character, but most have discussed words or imagery as though the plays were poems. The tendency, exemplified in the work of Miss Spurgeon and her followers, to separate Shakespeare the poet from Shakespeare the dramatist, can be illustrated from the work of other critics. F. E. Halliday in his recent discussion of Shakespeare and his Critics observed

It is important to remember that Shakespeare was a poet before he was a dramatist, he was a poet born and a dramatist by profession. 1

Leone Vivante found that "the wide rose of the psyche opens and unfolds itself in the words and images of Shakespeare", 2 and E. C. Pettet has found evidence in the plays to show that Shakespeare's own view of his poetry was similar:

everything in his poetry goes to suggest that it was created, just as he indicates, by a largely spontaneous, and often subconscious, process of self-generation. 3

Such views as these were perhaps in the minds of many of the critics whose work has been discussed in this section, for although they have extended Miss Spurgeon's work in various ways, they have still considered words and images as though they were independent of the dramatic structure of the plays in which they occur.

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1 Shakespeare and his Critics, London 1949, p.120.

2 English Poetry and its Contribution to the Knowledge of a Creative Principle, London 1950, p.58.

3 'Shakespeare's Conception of Poetry' in Essays and Studies, New Series, 111 (1950), 29-46. The quotation is on p.37.

(vi) The 'New' Criticism

The group of American writers who call themselves the 'New' critics have based their approach to poetry and poetic drama largely on the tenets of I. A. Richards and T. S. Eliot, and their work is closely related to that of the English group of critics whose writings have appeared in the magazine 'Scrutiny'. The best-known critics of the American group are perhaps Cleanth Brooks and R. B. Heilman, whose books have been published in England, and of the English group, F. R. Leavis, D. A. Traversi and L. C. Knights, whose essay on Macbeth has been discussed. A selection only of their writings will be examined here, for they are not interested in imagery itself so much as in the structure<sup>1</sup> of paradoxical meanings they find in poetry.

In The Well Wrought Urn, Cleanth Brooks, having stated his primary assumption that "the language of poetry is the language of paradox",<sup>2</sup> proceeded to examine what he considered to be the most important chains of imagery in Macbeth, the imagery of the "naked

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<sup>1</sup> Critical articles written in sympathy with the views of the 'New' critics have appeared frequently in certain American journals, notably 'The Sewanee Review' and 'The Kenyon Review'.

<sup>2</sup> New York 1947; English edition 1949, p.3.



babe", and clothing imagery. The "naked babe" became for Brooks the most powerful symbol in the play, signifying "the future which Macbeth would control and cannot control",<sup>1</sup> and for him the tragedy seemed to be resolved into man's attempt and failure to control the future. The search for 'meanings' of this sort was the real purpose of his analysis

it is in terms of structure that we must describe poetry... The structure meant is a structure of meanings, evaluations and interpretations; and the principle of unity which informs it seems to be one of balancing and harmonizing connotations, attitudes and meanings.

2

Although he is a sensitive and imaginative critic, the search for these structures of meaning caused him to find allusions to clothing or the "naked babe" in many passages, and to make strange or forced interpretations. Thus he described Macduff's killing of Macbeth in these terms: "The naked babe confronts Macbeth to pronounce his doom".<sup>3</sup>

The Well Wrought Urn was devoted to an analysis

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p.42. The essay on Macbeth, 'The Naked Babe and the Cloak of Manliness', occupies pp.21-46; it is a reworking of an article 'Shakespeare as a Symbolist Poet', which appeared in Yale Review xxxiv (June 1945), 642-65.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.178.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.44.

of ten poems by major poets ranging from Shakespeare to Yeats. It was designed to show that all the best poetry is paradoxical, representing the wholeness of experience with its mutually opposed impulses. This approach derives largely from the establishment of Donne as a major poet, for which T. S. Eliot was mainly responsible, and from the views of I. A. Richards.<sup>1</sup> The poetry of Donne is seen by the 'New' critics as reconciling and unifying sets of diverse and opposed impulses, and as including the whole of experience without omitting unpleasant or discordant aspects. Richards distinguished two kinds of poetry, 'exclusive' poetry, which ignores discordant impulses, and 'inclusive' poetry, which expresses the whole experience, complex, even contradictory, as it may be.<sup>2</sup> Donne's poetry is claimed to be 'inclusive' poetry

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<sup>1</sup> see T. S. Eliot, Homage to John Dryden, London, 1924, containing his essay on 'The Metaphysical Poets', pp.24-33, which adumbrated many of Brooks' views. See especially pp.30-1, where Eliot linked Donne's verse with modern poetry in its complexity and difficulty. cf. also Eliot's essay 'Donne in our Time' in ed. T. Spencer, A Garland for John Donne, Cambridge, Mass., 1931, pp.3-19. I. A. Richards expounded his views in The Principles of Literary Criticism, London, 1928; (1st edition 1924); Chapter XXII, pp.239-53, on 'Imagination' is especially important.

<sup>2</sup> op.cit., pp.249ff.

in this sense, and its complexity and paradox provide these critics with a basis for defending complexity and obscurity in modern poetry. To strengthen his critical position Brooks devoted a chapter of his earlier book, Modern Poetry and the Tradition, to demonstrating a basic harmony between the views of Richards and Eliot.<sup>1</sup>

Although, as this book shows, his critical approach arose primarily from a desire to defend modern poetry, Brooks quickly built from it a theory to evaluate all poetry, and wrote as a final chapter<sup>2</sup> 'Notes for a Revised History of English Poetry'. He sought to apply to all poetry the critical principles derived from the study of Donne's poetry and the defence of modern poetry. For him poetry became a structure of meanings contained in its imagery; the poet can only say what he has to say in imagery, and therefore the structure of meanings which form a poem can be found by analysing imagery. Brooks said of the metaphysical poets:

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<sup>1</sup> Chapel Hill, 1939. See Chapter 3, 'Metaphysical Poetry and Propaganda Art', pp.39-53, especially pp. 40-3.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.* Chapter 14, pp.219-44.

We cannot remove the comparisons [i.e. images] from their poems, as we might remove ornaments or illustrations attached to a statement, without demolishing the poems. The comparison is the poem in a structural sense. 1

It was with this in mind that he wrote The Well Wrought Urn, seeking for structures of meanings, paradox and complexity in the poetry of ten major English poets.

It is notable that of the writers connected with the 'New' critics, T. S. Eliot alone seems to have been aware that his defence of Donne was really a defence of his own verse, and he has said recently of the poet turned critic

... he is always trying to defend the kind of poetry he is writing, or to formulate the kind that he wants to write ... what he writes about poetry, in short, must be assessed in relation to the poetry he writes. 2

He went on in the same essay to observe, "the striking difference between dramatic blank verse and blank verse employed for epic, philosophical, meditative and idyllic purposes", how the poet speaks only for himself, the dramatist through the medium of actors, and therefore the dramatist's language must be the language of a world

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1  
ibid., p.15.

2  
The Music of Poetry, Glasgow 1942, pp.6-9.

of people, and connected, if it is to be effective, with the speech rhythms of normal speech. The 'New' critics on the other hand apply their critical standards absolutely, and make no distinction between dramatic and 'pure' poetry, but treat all in the same way.

The approach of the 'New' critics, especially in relation to Shakespeare, has been violently, and often justly criticised by other writers. O. J. Campbell has pointed out that like Wilson Knight, Brooks and his associates tend to reduce the complexity of a play to a conflict between abstractions, and he claimed that Shakespeare did not use imagery to create a pattern of meanings, as the 'New' critics imply, but to "intensify an auditor's response to particular situations and also .. to create and individualize his characters".<sup>1</sup> Campbell was also critical of the 'Scrutiny' group for using methods similar to those of Brooks. He cited in particular D. A. Traversi's essay on Measure for Measure, in which the play was seen as a conflict between passion and moral law, a view developed from an interpretation of one speech.<sup>2</sup> E. E. Stoll has also attacked the 'New'

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<sup>1</sup> 'Shakespeare and the 'New' Critics' in ed. McManaway, Dawson and Willoughby, Joseph Quincy Adams Memorial Studies Washington 1946, pp.81-96. The quotation is on pp.95-6.

<sup>2</sup> 'Measure for Measure' in Scrutiny, xi (Summer 1942), 40-58. The speech is Claudio's confession to Lucio, I, ii, 129 ff.

critics, and said that the symbolism Brooks read into Macbeth was a modern poetic usage, and would not have been thought of by Shakespeare. He criticised the group for looking at Shakespeare's plays as poetry, not drama, as matter to be read, not heard and seen, so that in their view a play "should not only mean, but stagger under a load of meanings" which pass unnoticed in a stage representation<sup>1</sup>. With less justification Stoll was also hostile towards two articles by Leo Kirschbaum and J. I. M. Stewart<sup>2</sup>. The first was an attempt to show that Cleopatra in Antony and Cleopatra is given unity of character by means of iterative imagery, in that she is seen by other characters in terms of what satisfies the senses, especially hunger, and speaks herself in erotic language. Kirschbaum pointed out many more references to food than the twelve images noted by Miss Bourgeon, and suggested that non-figurative language as well as metaphor should be regarded in a discussion of

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<sup>1</sup> 'Symbolism in Shakespeare' in E.L.R., xlii (January 1947), 9-23. The quotation is on p.17. This article begins with an attack on Cleanth Brooks' 'Shakespeare as a Symbolist Poet', see above, note 1, page 81.

<sup>2</sup> Leo Kirschbaum, 'Shakespeare's Cleopatra' in S.A.R., xix (October 1944), 161-71; J. I. M. Stewart, 'The Blinding of Gloucester' in E.E.S., xli (October 1946), 864-70.

imagery. The other article was a justification of the blinding of Gloucester in King Lear; Stewart paid particular attention to imagery of sight, and to the way in which the action of the stage crystallises the imagery of physical outrage which Miss Spurgeon observed. In his criticism Stoll said that it is wrong to attach importance to the imagery of sight in King Lear, for whereas the word 'see' occurs forty-three times in that play, it occurs forty-four times in Antony and Cleopatra,<sup>1</sup> and nearly as many in Othello and Hamlet. However, as R. D. Altick has shown, this reliance on statistics may be quite misleading.

R. B. Heilman, a disciple of Brooks, has also paid much attention to sight imagery in his book on King Lear; he sought the structure of meanings in the play's imagery, and said that all metaphors were part of the total meaning and "must be related to the large metaphor which is the play itself".<sup>2</sup> He found King Lear to be a play concerned with ways of looking at the world.

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<sup>1</sup> op.cit. pp.20-3. cf. also the further criticism of the 'New' critics by E. E. Stoll in 'A New "Reading" of Othello' in M.P., xlv (February 1948), 208-10.

<sup>2</sup>

This Great Stage: Image and Structure in King Lear, Louisiana, 1948. For an early anticipation of the emphasis laid by both Stewart and Heilman on sight imagery see P. V. Kreider, 'Gloucester's Eyes' in S.A.B., viii (July-October 1933), 121-32. The quotation is on p.12; cf. with this Wilson Knight's dictum that we must "see each play as an expanded metaphor".

and containing a mass of "value judgments" in its patterns of imagery, so that the language forms "rich and stimulating patterns of meaning".<sup>1</sup> Heilman analysed patterns relating to sight, clothes, nature and animals, age and justice, madness and religion; and at the end of each chapter summed up the meaning of the pattern discussed. This meaning usually appeared as a paradox, as in the conclusion to the section on clothes imagery: "In proud array Lear failed; uncrowned, half-naked he is saved. This is a central paradox of the play", and the profundity of the play was resolved into a single affirmation of an idea, such as "The play's ultimate refinement of statement ... is that man is wholly evil when reason and animality work together".<sup>2</sup>

Heilman found in King Lear complex patterns of imagery, all interrelated, which provide the play's meaning. He forced into his patterns most disparate lines, sometimes misinterpreted, and paid no attention whatever to the play as a sequence of events in time. In the passage

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<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*, pp.28, 25.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, pp.86, 105.



Love's not love  
When it is mingled with regards that stand  
Aloof from th'entire point

I, i, 238-40

the word "regards" was fitted into the sight pattern and interpreted as "that is, his [Burgundy's] seeing is directed by the wrong values", and a single word, "unhaste", in the opening scene was said to link with sex imagery<sup>1</sup> attached to Goneril and Regan at the end of the play. Heilman has continued his study of King Lear in a more recent article, in which, however, he was concerned with the mythical qualities to be found in this play and the other tragedies.<sup>2</sup> His book has been severely criticised by W. R. Keast, who made some important observations. Of Heilman's belief that iteration of a word gives it symbolic significance, opening the mind to all its possible connotations, he remarked

What repetition, artistically handled,  
does is to open those possibilities,  
and those only, that are relevant to the  
play.

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He pointed out also that imagery should be related to

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ibid., pp. 62, 102.

2

'The Lear World' in English Institute Essays 1948, New York 1949, 29-57. In this Heilman acknowledged a debt to the work of Wilson Knight and Colin Still.

3

'Imagery and Meaning in the Interpretation of King Lear' in M.P. xlvii (August 1949), 45-65. The quotation is on p. 53.

character, to action and to its context, and that Heilman's symbolic reading of a play, interpreting a whole play as a metaphor, tells us no more about it than does a literal reading.

The writings of the 'New' critics have provoked much argument,<sup>1</sup> and R. H. Fogle seems to have based his full-length study of The Imagery of Keats and Shelley on a repudiation of their ideas, for he began with a chapter criticising in particular the tenets of Richards and Empson, and finished the book with a wholesale attack on the 'New' critics' evaluation of romantic poetry.<sup>2</sup> He observed as a common fault in the study of imagery that

a figure or image is sometimes thought of as one term, sometimes as another. Frequently it is considered to be both terms of a comparison

but his own definition of imagery as "used broadly to signify the principle of figurativeness", merged in

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<sup>1</sup> For further criticism and evaluation see Gordon Symes, 'The Paradoxes of Poetry' in English, viii (Summer 1950), 69-73; M. Krieger, 'Creative Criticism' in Sewanee Review, lviii (Winter 1950), 36-51; E. S. Crane, 'Cleanth Brooks; or, The Bankruptcy of Critical Notionism' in M.P., xlv (May 1948), 226-45; W. T. Hastings, 'The New Critics of Shakespeare: An Analysis of the Technical Analysis of Shakespeare' in Shakespeare Quarterly, 1 (July 1950), 165-76.

<sup>2</sup> The Imagery of Keats and Shelley. A Comparative Study. Chapel Hill, 1949. Chapter 6, on the 'New' critics is headed 'Romantic Bards and Metaphysical Reviewers'.

practice into that of Miss Spurgeon.<sup>1</sup> He classified images "according to their sensory content" under headings such as Visual, Audible, Tactile and Olfactory, that is, he replaced Miss Spurgeon's specific headings by general classes. Unlike Miss Spurgeon, however, he realised that "Imagery as here defined does not, unfortunately, lie wholly within the realm of objective classification".<sup>2</sup> Fogle's book is in many respects valuable, and his attack on the 'New' critics illuminating. Fogle, like Miss Spurgeon, was interested primarily in the sensory sources of imagery, whereas the 'New' critics have studied imagery because for them the meaning of a poem lies in its pattern of metaphor. Both approaches have produced some stimulating criticism of poetry, but in both the tendency has been to treat a play as a poem. Thus the 'New' critics have treated Shakespeare's plays as poems, and twist out subtle connotations without regard to time-sequence, or to the probable inability of any audience and most readers to make their subtle linkages. Furthermore, they force

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp.21, 4.

<sup>2</sup>  
<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p.20.

all the imagery into rigid patterns of meaning, and in consequence, sometimes make forced or unjustified interpretations.

### (vii) Theoretical Criticism

The majority of the critical works so far considered have been concerned in some measure with the poetry in Shakespeare's plays, but the interest the Elizabethans had in formal linguistic devices, their preoccupation with logic and rhetoric, their attitude towards imagery and its use have for the most part been ignored. All these factors have a bearing on Shakespeare's imagery, particularly if imagery is seen as a reflection of the author's personality, or as embodying his views on the world. Some note will therefore be made of recent research into these topics. There remain also to be discussed a few critical works more generally concerned with the nature and function of imagery.

Several writers have observed Shakespeare's use of proverbs, and lists of hundreds occurring in the plays have been compiled.<sup>1</sup> Elizabethan dramatists commonly made

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of. R. Jente, 'The Proverbs of Shakespeare' in Washington University Studies, xiii, Series iv (April 1926), 391-444. He listed 376 proverbs quoted or alluded to in Shakespeare plays. cf. also M. P. Tilley, Elizabethan Proverb Lore in Lyly's Euphues and Pettie's Petite Palace, with parallels from Shakespeare, London 1926. About 400 parallels from Shakespeare are cited.

use of proverbial material and sentences, and Katherine Lever, who examined the use of such material in Shakespeare's plays and in relation to character, found that:

When the generalizations are ...  
classified by content, it becomes  
apparent at once that many different  
and mutually exclusive opinions are  
held about the same subject.

The popularity of commonplace books, compilations of proverbs, examples, similes and the like, numbers of which appeared towards the end of the sixteenth century, would further suggest that much of the imagery used by the dramatists was commonplace at the time, and likely to be used by several of them without suspicion of plagiarism. The theory of imitation, which according to H. O. White was generally held to be valid until 1625 at the earliest, would also encourage dramatists to

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See Chapter 5, 'Conventions of Speech', in M. C. Bradbrook, Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy, Cambridge, 1935. See also in relation to Shakespeare F. P. Wilson, 'Shakespeare and the Dictation of Common Life' (Annual British Academy Shakespeare Lecture, 1941 in Proceedings of the British Academy, xxvii (1944), 157-97).

Katherine Lever, 'Proverbs and Sententiae in the Plays of Shakespeare' in S.A.B., xiii (July-October 1938), 173-83 and 224-39. The quotation is on p.236.

e.g. Wit's Commonwealth, 1597; Palladis Tamia, Wit's Treasury, 1598 (by Francis Meres). These and other commonplace books were discussed by W. G. Crane in his Wit and Rhetoric in the Renaissance, New York, 1937. See especially Chapter 3, 'The English Commonplace Books', pp.33-48.

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make use of material from the work of other writers,  
as long as the subject-matter of literature was  
considered common property, and originality consisted  
in choosing models carefully and improving on them.  
Another aspect of this usage of common material has  
been studied by Albert L. Walker who claimed that in  
Shakespeare's plays

dramatic representation of such powerful  
themes as revenge, jealousy, love, murder  
and bereavement is profoundly influenced  
by sets of conventional ideas and  
procedures inherited not only from earlier  
drama ... but also from non-dramatic  
literature

2

He showed that Shakespeare frequently drew on common  
ideas, and "did not hesitate to express common ideas  
through imagery which itself was conventional".  
3  
Some  
of these conventional ideas recur in books of emblems.

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1  
H. O. White, Plagiarism and Imitation during the English  
Renaissance, Cambridge, Mass., 1936. The first use of  
'plagiarism' recorded by the N.E.D. was in 1621.

2  
Albert L. Walker, 'Convention in Shakespeare's  
Description of Emotion' in P.Q., xvii (October 1938),  
26-66. The Quotation is on p.28.

3  
ibid., p.53. Walker noted that neither Miss Spurgeon,  
Miss Holmes, Wilson Knight, nor other writers on  
imagery had paid attention to conventional imagery.

as has been shown by various writers,<sup>1</sup> and certain of the images used by Shakespeare have close linkages with emblems, such as Lady Macbeth's advice to her husband

look like the innocent flower,  
But be the serpent under't. I.v.66-7

Possibly the whole casket scene in The Merchant of Venice had emblematic associations for some at least<sup>2</sup> of Shakespeare's audience.

It is thus not surprising that H. Bayley was able to collect a wealth of parallel passages, passages sometimes of identical phraseology, and uses of the same or similar imagery, from Elizabethan drama and to a lesser extent prose.<sup>3</sup> Theodore Spencer has dealt in

<sup>1</sup> See H. Green, Shakespeare and the Emblem Writers, London 1870; Mario Praz, Studies in Seventeenth Century Imagery, 2 vols., London 1939; Rosemary Freeman, English Emblem Books, London, 1946.

<sup>2</sup> The Macbeth allusion was noted by Green, op.cit. pp. 340-3 (see Geoffrey Whitney, A Choice of Emblemes, and other devices... Leyden 1586, p.24, where a flower and serpent emblem is given under the heading 'Latet anguis in herba'; the motto begins "Of flattringe speche with sugred wordes beware..."), and analogies in other plays of Shakespeare were cited. The possible associations with an emblem of the casket scene in The Merchant of Venice do not seem to have been observed. In the Emblemata of Sambucus (Antwerp, 1564) occurs under the heading 'Fortuna Duce' a representation of a room with a chest on each side, and a man and woman viewing them. The motto reads

Sunt binas hic cistae quarum tenet altera plumbum  
Auro sed gravis est altera, neutra patet.  
Optio si fallat, plumbum ut pro divite oculus  
Arripias auro: quis tibi causa mali est?

and so on. This emblem is on p.26.

<sup>3</sup> The Shakespeare Symphony, London 1906.

particular with expressions relating to death in Elizabethan tragedy, and has shown how the same ideas and language describing death recurred in play after play, and formed part of an established way of regarding death which extended back into the middle ages.<sup>1</sup> He has shown that some of the finest images in Shakespeare's plays were stock images revitalised by new phrasing; for instance, he cited four parallels with Macbeth's "Out, out brief candle", one as close as

What booteth it to live in base contempt ...  
Out with thy candle, let it burne no more<sup>2</sup>

He pointed out also that the common personifications of death as a lean abhorred monster, or as an antic, a fool (as in Richard II) were derived from portrayals of the Dance of Death which were painted on so many walls, and again cited a number of parallels from diverse authors.<sup>3</sup> It has thus become clear that much of the imagery used by Shakespeare and other

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<sup>1</sup> Death and Elizabethan Tragedy, Cambridge, Mass., 1936.

<sup>2</sup> ibid., pp.103-4. The quotation is from Anthony Coppley's A Fig for Fortune, 1596.

<sup>3</sup> ibid., pp.71ff. See also Green, Shakespeare and the Emblem Writers, pp.469ff. There are interesting references to such paintings in, for example, Macbeth "'tis the eye of childhood / That fears a painted devil" (II,ii,54-5), and Webster's The White Devil "Terrify babes, my Lord, with painted devils" (III,ii,151)



Elizabethan authors was based on a stock of traditional or common-place ideas, expressions and pictorial representations, and to sort out an author's own ideas or interests, as some have attempted, is a very difficult task indeed. This wealth of similar stock images deriving from communal and age-old expressions and experience may partly account for the permanent interest as well as the remarkable anonymity of the Elizabethan drama.<sup>1</sup>

The frequent common-place and sententious material of Elizabethan imagery is connected with the Elizabethan attitude towards imagery and concept of its function, and these in turn relate to the stress on logic and rhetoric at that time. The importance of logic and rhetoric has been examined

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1

Elizabethan drama seems to have had close connections with folk-lore and myth, a question which needs further exploration. In a recent article 'The Very Pompes of the Divell-Popular and Folk Elements in Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama' in R.E.S., xxv (January 1949), 10-23, Douglas Hewitt noted certain folk-lore elements, especially in King Lear. In this connection some interesting notes were made by F. M. Cornford in his studies of Greek drama; he drew attention for instance to the origin in ritual and persistence in folk-lore of the battles between Winter (Hiems) and Spring (Ver), referred to in Love's Labours Lost, V.ii.901ff. of. The Origin of Attic Comedy, Cambridge 1934, pp.118-9; see also pp.155-6.

by various writers,<sup>1</sup> and both W. G. Crane and Miss G. D. Willcock, who has written an article on Shakespeare's consciousness of and use of rhetorical device<sup>2</sup> stressed the influence of Petrus Ramus (Pierre de la Ramée) upon English thought during the later sixteenth century. Another critic, Rosemond Tuve, has made a special study of the relationship between logic and imagery in this period, and has also<sup>3</sup> given an account of the work of this philosopher. Ramus effected two major revisions of ancient logic and rhetoric, firstly by reducing the number of 'places' of investigation upon which was based 'invention' of matter in writing, defined by Bacon as calling forth from our minds "that which may be pertinent to the purpose... So as, to speak truly, it is no Invention, but a Remembrance or Suggestion.

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<sup>1</sup> e.g. D. L. Clark, Rhetoric and Poetry in the Renaissance, New York, 1922; A. H. Gilbert, 'Logic in the Elizabethan Drama' in S.P., xxxii (October 1935), 527-45; Hardin Craig, 'Shakespeare and Formal Logic' in Studies in English Philology, A Miscellany in Honor of Frederick Klaeber, Minneapolis, 1929, pp.360-96.

<sup>2</sup> W. G. Crane, Wit and Rhetoric in the Renaissance, New York, 1937; G. D. Willcock, 'Shakespeare and Rhetoric' in Essays and Studies, xxix (1943), 50-61.

<sup>3</sup> 'Imagery and Logic: Ramus and Metaphysical Poetics' in J.H.I., iiii (October 1942), 365-400. The outline of Ramus's position which follows is based on this work, on Crane, op.cit., pp.55-7 and Tuve, Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery, Chicago 1947, pp.332ff.

1

with an application"; secondly, by allotting what had been traditionally the first two divisions of rhetoric, 'invention' and arrangement or 'disposition', that is, the structure of poetry, to logic. Abraham Fraunce's The Arcadian Rhetorike of 1588 was based on the work of Ramus and Balaeus his friend, of whom Crane said

Both men argued that all of the figures of thought which could be connected with the topics of investigation should be dealt with under the heading 'logic'. This left to rhetoric only a few tropes and figures.

2

A recent editor of Fraunce's work has observed the simplicity of the Ramist rhetoric compared to "Puttenham's imitation of Eusembrotus and his three hundred terms of Tropes and Schemes, concatenated rather than organized". These tropes and schemes would be largely embodied in logic, and both logic and rhetoric might be illustrated from poetry, as

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1  
Advancement of Learning, Book 2; cited in Crane, op.cit., p.207.

2

op.cit., p.79.

3

Ethel Seaton in her Introduction to her edition of The Arcadian Rhetorike, for The Luttrell Society, Oxford 1930, p.xviii.

Fraunce illustrated his work with copious quotations from the recent poetry of Sidney and other authors, much of it previously unpublished.<sup>1</sup> Miss Tuve said that under the Ramist system

The rhetorical art of the persuasive expression of thought - a concern primarily with form - has largely become one with the logical art of 'invention' and disposition of thought - a concern primarily with content; finding what to say includes, overlaps, is the same as, finding how to say it. 2

Thus to the Ramists all writing, including the writing of poetry and the making of poetic images, was grounded in logic, and imagery was logically functional as argument, persuading the reader and compelling the approval of his understanding. The Ramist position was an extension of the view generally held that the function of poetry was to teach and delight, with its stress on a didactic element. The Elizabethans, said Miss Tuve, did not make a sharp differentiation between thought and feeling, as is now commonly done; truth of statement mattered to them as well as delight, and

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1 Not only his rhetoric, but his lawiers Logike (1588) was embellished in this way; see Seaton, op.cit., p.xix.

2 Tuve, Imagery and Logic, p.380.

Images could not speak to the intelli  
or the imagination or the emotions;  
spoke in one single uninterrupted thoug  
act through the Imagination to the  
Understanding, thence through the Will to  
the Affections. 1

The Elizabethans then laid stress on the aptness and force of the relationship expressed in an image, and the poets tried to make this relationship clear. The image was effective if its controlled suggestions illuminated the relationship and caused the reader to ignore irrelevant connotations. This, Miss Tve pointed out, is a very different attitude from that of Miss Spurgeon who concentrated on the sources of the object-matter, and from that of the 'New' critics who would bring all possible connotations into play in their search for a structure of meanings. The relationship discussed by the Elizabethans was that between poem and reader, not, as in much modern criticism, that between poet and reader; the poet was the 'maker' of something apart from himself, and

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ibid., p.397. In a healthy mind, the imagination would be controlled by reason, although "Imagination ... is likely to become a foe to reason ... in fact. Elizabethan writers agree in describing this faculty as the general source of all our evils and disorderly passions" (Anderson, Elizabethan Psychology, pp.133-4). Thus in poetry as in other matters the reason, not the imagination was the final arbiter.

the poem was not examined as the expression of the poet's mind, as self-revelatory,<sup>1</sup> or as a welling-up from the unconscious. Indeed, it was a conscious art, as Sister Miriam Joseph has shown,<sup>2</sup> who examined and illustrated from the text of the plays all the rhetorical and grammatical figures used by Shakespeare, figures which were listed in many Elizabethan handbooks of poetics, such as Puttenham's The Arte of English Poesie, and of which most came within the Ramist scheme

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<sup>1</sup> The attitude of Miss Spurgeon towards poetry, the often-echoed dictum of I. A. Richards, "It is never what a poem says which matters, but what it is" (Science and Poetry, p.25), expressed in verse by Archibald MacLeish thus

A poem should not mean  
But be

('Ars Poetica' in Poems, London 1935, p.123), and statements such as that of Donald Stauffer, "The medium of poetry is language, which must be handled with precision in order to express the mind of the poet" (The Nature of Poetry, New York 1946, p.189), all illustrate aspects of a view of poetry quite different from that of, for instance, Puttenham. For him the matter, not the medium was primary, "every mans stile is for the most part according to the matter and subject of the writer, or so ought to be, and conformable thereunto". (The Arte of English Poesie 1589, ed. Arber, London 1869, p.161).

<sup>2</sup>

Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language, New York, 1947.

of logic. She found that

Shakespeare drew matter for his plays and poems from all the topics of invention... He employed all the rhetorical figures related to the several logical topics, sometimes adding comments which constitute a virtual definition of the figure. The characters in his plays manifest a knowledge and practice of rhetorical theory, lively, concrete, specific, displayed in parody as well as in serious application, which were expected to win a commensurate response from an audience similarly disciplined and practiced in the arts of logic and rhetoric.

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Miss Joseph has thus amplified Miss Tuve's demonstration of the logical function of imagery, and suggested further that an Elizabethan audience might derive a large measure of their enjoyment from the skilled application of a rhetoric and logic with which many were familiar.

These three critics, Crane, Miss Tuve and Miss Joseph have made clear the wide difference between the Elizabethan and modern attitudes towards imagery. Miss Tuve went on to attack the most usual methods of

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ibid., p.172. of the demand by William Kempe in The Education of Children in Learning (1580), that children should be taught not only "every trope, every figure, as well of words as of sentences; but also the Rhetoricall pronounciation and gesture fit for every word, sentence and affection", cited in B. L. Joseph, Elizabethan Acting, London, 1951, p.10.

classifying imagery in current criticism, in particular Miss Spurgeon's method of classifying the areas of derivation of the subject-matter. She claimed that the only satisfactory definition of images is by their formal cause, and

The formal defining element in any conceit ... seems to me to be this use of multiple logical bases, upon all of which the comparison obtains. 1

A study like that of Miss Spurgeon, she said, deals with what is variable in imagery; the content of the image, its subject-matter, has different connotations for different people and therefore

We should ... have images ranged according to a basis of 'like-ness' which is almost completely irrelevant to the effect of the image as an element of aesthetic form. All that is poetically important about the image is as yet undetermined. 2

In other words, Miss Tve thought it of little value to

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1 Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery, p.264.

2 ibid., p.423n. Miss Tve's terminology is often obscure, and elsewhere she condemned Miss Spurgeon's method of classifying images according to "the area from whence comparisons are drawn" on the grounds that this was "an unfirm basis, if not indeed an aesthetically irrelevant consideration" (ibid., p.254). Although her thought seems confused here, the main points of her attack on Miss Spurgeon's method are clear.



discuss the subject-matter of imagery and the picture evoked by it, the free connotations aroused by an image in isolation, which vary in nature and significance for each reader; the controlled associations, those relevant to the context, and which the poet intended to suggest, are alone poetically important. Therefore images should be classified according to their logical base and function, which are stable. Miss Tuve pointed out that to attempt to define a thing by the ten logical categories derived from Aristotle, "substance, quality, quantity, relation, manner of doing, manner of suffering, when, where, situs, habitus", naturally produced images, and framing images was one of the basic logical processes taught<sup>1</sup> to Elizabethan students. Thus the image in Macbeth

Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care  
IL, II, 37

which was for Miss Spurgeon a domestic image, conveying a picture of frayed silk, would presumably be classified by Miss Tuve as an image defining sleep, based on the logical category "manner of doing".

This classification does have the merit of throwing emphasis on what is dramatically and poetically

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<sup>1</sup>

ibid., pp. 284ff.; cf. also her Imagery and Logic, pp. 373-7.

important in this image, the amplification of the idea of sleep as a supreme benefit. However, there are several difficulties in Miss Tuve's method. In the first place her analyses were confined to 'metaphysical' poetry, and she was not concerned with drama at all. The poetry she considered is largely reflective and argumentative, and likely to be amenable to logical analysis. Secondly, while simple images may be based on single logical parallels, as for instance the 'predicament' or category 'quality' which gives rise to many similes, Miss Tuve herself said

Multiple parallels in predicament result in more and more complicated images: the conceit, whether Elizabethan or metaphysical, is sometimes based on one of the more tenuous logical links, but characteristically is based on multiple parallels, frequently in three or four predicaments simultaneously. 1

Classification of images according to their logical bases would evidently be most complicated and unwieldy, entailing endless subdivision. Thirdly, although Miss Tuve would seem to be demanding a more scientific method of classifying images, she said elsewhere

It is often quite impossible to count the number of images in a poem; the number will differ for the same reader in different readings. 2

1

Imagery and Logic, p.377.

2

Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery, p.423n.

Thus she demanded an objective method of classification, and at the same time admitted that her counting of images was subjective. Fourthly, logical processes are not widely taught at present, and the classification of images according to the systems of logic and the terminology current in the sixteenth century would be meaningless except to the scholar. Lastly, while Miss Tve was right to point out that many images which are in other respects quite incongruous are lumped together in a classification by sources of the subject-matter, the same criticism applies to her method. Her<sup>1</sup> method may be satisfactory for the comparison of images, but in a sense she was denying her own principles in putting it forward; for she stressed the logical functions of imagery, and if these are important, if images are a means to an end, then it is only in their context that they have significance. In classifying them according to logical bases of comparison, Miss Tve ignored their content, emotional importance, and their place in the scheme of the poem concerned, and if the images had been in a drama, she

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<sup>1</sup> of. Imagery and Logic, p.365: "This paper will ... first discuss a basis upon which different kinds of images may be distinguished from and compared with one another".

would have ignored other factors also, such as their relation to character and time-sequence.

Miss Tuve's work is however very important, since she is one of few critics who have taken into account the Elizabethan attitude to imagery. She recognized that images were regarded as having a logical function in poetry, not as ends in themselves, were intended to clarify, not to evoke wide connotations, to persuade and delight by fitting analogies, not merely to express emotion, to make evaluations, not merely to express a mood, and finally to observe the principle of decorum in being fitting to the subject of the poem, whereas at present there is "a notion fairly common among critics - that the subject of a poem does not really matter very much".<sup>1</sup> The Elizabethan view of the relationship between logic and poetry is no longer held; indeed logic has come to be regarded as alien and even opposed to poetry. This attitude, expressed in the opposition set up by I. A. Richards and others between 'scientific' and 'emotive' language, has been fostered by the work of influential modern philosophical writers, especially the logical/positivists. A recent

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery, p.236.

volume of essays by various writers was intended to bring to the notice of laymen the preoccupation of modern philosophers with problems of language, and their desire

to have in our language only those kinds of statement that are not dependent, as regards their truth or falsity, on any circumstance in which the statement happens to be made... We are prepared to sacrifice local and personal colour, or period flavour, in order that our statement may be handed on unaltered to other persons who are differently situated or to ourselves in other situations. 1

in other words, their desire for a 'scientific' language. A. J. Ayer used the terms 'scientific' and 'emotive' in relation to language in his influential book Language, Truth and Logic; 2 he evidently believed that language could be used with precision to describe itself and as a philosophical instrument, and he banished everything 'emotive', including metaphysics, from philosophy. For him philosophy was the logic of science.

Thus in current literary criticism it is not uncommon to find poetry aligned with metaphysics, and regarded as the spontaneous outpouring of the spirit,

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1 edited A. G. N. Flew, Essays on Logic and Language, Oxford, 1961. The quotation is on pp.52-3, in an essay by J. N. Findlay, 'Time: A Treatment of Some Puzzles'. The essay occupies pp.37-54.

2 London, 1938. See especially pp.85-8, 158ff.

expressing eternal values. Imagery is sometimes regarded in this way, as an unconscious expression of the author's deepest intentions and meaning, which may differ from, or be opposed to the apparent meaning of a work as being of greater value. In all these cases imagery is analysed usually in isolation from context, since not its context, but its original emotive or spiritual quality in itself gives it value. Probably it is as impossible for the living medium of language to be completely emotive, as it is for language to be completely scientific in its use;

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As in, for example, Leone Vivante, English Poetry, and its Contribution to the Knowledge of a Creative Principle, London, 1950. 'Poetic thought' is here distinguished from 'prosaic thought' as relating to the spirit, "It is the proper character of poetical, as opposed to prosaic thought, to rescue quality from being a mere attribute of the objectified and solidified symbol of its conditions and antecedents" (pp.42-3).

2

This has been observed by a recent critic of logical positivism; J. Holloway in Language and Intelligence, London 1951, said that a precise language is impossible; "It might be possible to complete the systematisation of language, if its use were a unique activity. But it is impossible; and this constitutes one further argument that using language is a part of behaviour in general, and has a character appropriate to its origin" (p.189, in his final summing up).

poetry conveys thought as well as feeling, and prose, even in its most 'scientific' use conveys some measure of feeling, or is given feeling in its interpretation by a reader. Certainly there is a difference between poetry and prose, but the alienation of meaning from poetry and a rigid distinction between 'emotive' and 'scientific' language are unnecessary in order to demonstrate the difference, and moreover, have led to a concentration on the free connotations evoked by images in themselves, rather than on their meaning in the context. On the other hand Miss Tave's concentration on the logical bases and function of images caused her to ignore the emotive and evocative qualities of imagery and poetry. Perhaps for an adequate study of imagery a combination of the two ways of approach is desirable.

### Conclusion

For the most part the critical works discussed in this chapter have been concerned with poetic imagery in the strict sense of metaphor and simile, occasionally with iterative words separately or in addition. In general no distinction was drawn between dramatic and non-dramatic poetry, and similar methods of study were applied to the imagery of Donne's poetry, Paradise Lost and Shakespeare's plays. In view of this equation of drama with

poetry, it is interesting that C. Day Lewis, who has discussed the nature and functions of imagery in non-dramatic poetry, and Una Ellis-Fermor, who considered the functions of poetic imagery in drama, reached very different conclusions.

In The Poetic Image, Day Lewis abandoned his attempt to define an image after enlarging his original proposition, "In its simplest terms it is a picture made out of words",<sup>1</sup> by adding that this picture must be something more than an accurate reflection of reality, must be sensuous, and charged to some extent with passion. He went on to discuss what an image does, and found that the pattern of images in a poem creates a poetic world which

has meaning for us in so far as any given poem, by virtue of its image-pattern, has correspondences with the pattern of what we call the real world. <sup>2</sup>

The affinity perceived between external objects and transferred emotionally to the reader by the poet suggests that there are affinities between all other things in the universe, and the pattern of poetry thus satisfies the human yearning for order in the

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<sup>1</sup> London, 1947, p.18.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p.28.



world. Day Lewis found a short definition of an image impracticable, but what definition he gave was similar in effect to that made by Miss Spurgeon, though more elastic in that his was not confined strictly to metaphor and simile. Thus on the basis of a definition similar to that accepted by Miss Ellis-Fermor, he found it possible to describe the function of imagery in poetry in one sentence.

On the other hand, in a valuable chapter of The Frontiers of Drama,<sup>1</sup> Miss Ellis-Fermor has enumerated many functions of poetic imagery in drama. She noted that imagery helps to overcome the disadvantages of brevity by giving an impression of magnitude; that the concentration natural to drama is increased by the compression of imagery; that imagery helps to provide fullness and elaboration of detail in the revelation of character; that it "reveals the relations between the world of the play and a wider surrounding world or universe",<sup>2</sup> and is more effective in doing this than setting or symbolism; that its most frequent function is to

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London 1945. See especially pp.77-95.

<sup>2</sup>  
ibid., p.83.

reveal or keep in mind the underlying mood, knitting the play together by iteration; and that imagery provides anticipation of future events in a play.

She also observed that

the characters reveal themselves by their instinctive choice of subjects in which to image their thought, and often also by the form of the image, by the relation, that is between subject [i.e. subject-matter] and theme. 1

A further function of imagery is to do the work of argument or reflection as in the political discussion in Troilus and Cressida, or in the soliloquies of Hamlet. Miss Ellis-Fermor did not claim this as a definitive list of the functions of imagery in drama; indeed she has said elsewhere, "it would be foolish to suppose that those of us who have discovered some five or six have come to the end of the story". 2

The contrast between her seemingly endless list

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1  
ibid., p.67.

2  
'The Poet's Imagery' in The Listener, 28 July 1949, p.156. In an article on 'Imagery and Drama' in Durham University Journal, New Series, x (December 1948), 24-33, K. Severs enumerated four functions of imagery in drama, to indicate the whole meaning of a play, to give information and illuminate character, to sum up in little the meaning of a play, and finally, in iterative patterns playing on associated ideas, to indicate the dominant emotion of scene or character. The first three of these functions are performed by the language, poetic or non-poetic, of any drama, and the fourth is derived from Miss Spurgeon's work.

of functions of imagery in drama and Day Lewis's single all-embracing definition of its function in poetry is remarkable. The latter's definition, that imagery draws things into affinity and patterns them in a whole, the poem, thereby suggesting order and relationship in the external world, though of wider scope, is closely related to one of the functions listed by Miss Ellis-Fermor, that imagery in drama reveals connections between the world of the play and the external world. The fact that Day Lewis was satisfied with a single function for imagery in poetry, and that adumbrated in one of the functions of imagery in drama, to the number of which Miss Ellis-Fermor could not suggest a limit, indicates that a different approach is required to drama, which is more complex than and different from poetry. Both critics were discussing poetic imagery, and their definitions of an image were similar; that of Day Lewis has been quoted, and Miss Ellis-Fermor said

when we speak of imagery ... we generally find that we are using the term in that stricter and somewhat limited sense which recent writers [she lists in a footnote Miss Spurgeon, Wells, Murry, Elizabeth Holmes, Wilson Knight, Brown, Clemen and others] have tended to adopt when considering Shakespeare, taking it, that is, as

co-extensive with metaphor, or at most with the figures closely allied to metaphor.

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This view she has restated more recently:

There is relative agreement now as to what we mean by an image, so I shall not define it. For practical purposes we may think of it as a metaphor, or, at most, as a figure of speech closely allied to metaphor.

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There was certainly "relative agreement" between these two critics as to what constitutes an image, but if, as their work suggests, poetic imagery has many more functions in drama than in poetry, it would seem that its functions in drama are bound up <sup>with</sup> other factors, and a difference in function may be indicative of a difference in nature between poetic imagery and what may be called dramatic imagery.

If Miss Ellis-Fermor's list of functions is considered closely, it is evident that many of them, for instance, relating the world of the play to the external world, revealing mood, anticipating future events, giving an impression of magnitude, are, or can be, carried out by non-figurative language, by setting, stage effect or symbolism in poetic drama. It is

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1 The Frontiers of Drama, p.78.

2 'The Poet's Imagery', p.157.

questionable whether the poetic imagery in a play should be considered separately from the action, effect, and, in modern plays, the setting, to which it constantly relates, or whether iteration of images should be considered separately from iteration of words and repeated use of symbols. Costume and action individualise characters as well as imagery, and in fact the only function mentioned by Miss Ellis-Fermor which is perhaps a special function of poetic imagery is that of helping by its compression of language to overcome the disadvantages of brevity in a play. This is not to deny that imagery has the other functions she listed, but to point out that the dramatist has other means at his disposal than the poet, for he may employ action, language, symbol, setting and costume simultaneously. Drama is more complex than poetry, and if the two do merge to some extent in poetic drama, this is still drama, has methods and effects different from those of poetry, and needs to be treated differently in criticism. For the study<sup>1</sup> of imagery, a new concept is needed of dramatic imagery as distinct from poetic imagery; dramatic imagery would

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'dramatic imagery' has been used before by G. H. W. Rylands in Words and Poetry, and earlier by Carpenter (Metaphor and Simile, p.68) to indicate functional as distinct from ornamental poetic imagery.

include some of the means which a playwright such as Shakespeare uses in close connection with, frequently interrelated with patterns of poetic imagery, in order to secure his effects. Obvious instances are such powerful visual symbols as the blood in Macbeth, or the skull in Tourneur's The Revenger's Tragedy. Miss Ellis-Fermor, who has generally proposed a strict and limited definition of poetic imagery as metaphor, a definition similar to Miss Spurgeon's, has said

This is, I believe, advisable, even though in the special case of drama there are sometimes reasons for extending it to include the frontiers of symbolism, description, or even, it may be, the setting itself ...

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but she is one among very few indeed of the critics whose work has been discussed in this chapter in recognising drama as something of a "special case".

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<sup>1</sup> The Frontiers of Drama, p. 78.

## CHAPTER 2

### Critical Principles Involved in the Discussion of Imagery

CRITICAL PRINCIPLES INVOLVED IN THE DISCUSSION OF IMAGERY

Most criticism of the imagery of Elizabethan drama has been based on or connected with the principle that the most satisfactory way to approach poetic plays, especially the plays of Shakespeare, is to regard them as dramatic poems. When L. C. Knights stated this principle in 1933,<sup>1</sup> he was proposing a relatively new approach to Shakespeare, but it has become so widely accepted that in 1948 A. H. Sackton could say in his opening remarks in a book on Ben Jonson's plays:

it is now becoming a commonplace of criticism that an Elizabethan play may be approached most profitably not as a study in human character, or as an expression of an individual philosophy, but as a dramatic poem. 2

Writers on imagery have tended to consider the 'poetry' as something distinct and separable from the 'drama', the action and time-sequence; in the words of Moody Prior, a critic who has lamented this separation, they have tended to see "the dramatic features of Shakespeare's plays as irrelevant and trivial contrivings".<sup>3</sup> Acceptance

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<sup>1</sup> 'How Many Children had Lady Macbeth?', p.6.

<sup>2</sup> Rhetoric as a Dramatic Language in Ben Jonson, New York, 1948, p.4.

<sup>3</sup> 'Poetic Drama: An Analysis and a Suggestion' in English Institute Essays 1949 (New York, 1950), pp.3-32. The quotation is on p.22.



of this principle has given rise to 'literary' studies of poetic plays, based on close examination of poetic images, sometimes of other features of the language, and which may pay no attention to character, scene, stage-directions, properties, action or time-sequence. Although few of the critical works considered have contained an open avowal of this principle, the main critical attitudes on which they were based spring from this way of looking at a play, simply as poetry, as a work to be read, not acted. This chapter is concerned with an analysis and criticism of the most important of these attitudes.

### (1) Concentration on Poetic Imagery

The study of imagery has been generally confined to poetic imagery, for the most part strictly interpreted as metaphor and simile, but occasionally extended to include iterative words. A few critics, such as G. Wilson Knight, who sometimes included much besides language in his discussion of the 'spatial' element in Shakespeare's plays, Moody Prior and Roy Walker have rejected, in principle if not always in practice, the treatment of a poetic play as a poem. A few others, notably E. A. Armstrong and M. M. Morozov, have studied imagery for special and limited purposes, and their work does not enter into this

discussion. However, the critic who has had the widest influence on the study of imagery, Miss Spurgeon, restricted herself to the examination of metaphors and similes, or in her phrase, word-pictures, which limited imagery further to descriptive metaphor and simile. She also had as a primary aim something of a special purpose, to investigate Shakespeare's habits of mind and living as revealed in imagery, and to some extent her concentration on poetic imagery was therefore justified. She believed that imagery in this sense wells up from the unconscious mind, whereas all language other than metaphors refers to the trivialities of daily life, and has no evidential value regarding an author's mind or imaginative vision. This is equivalent to saying that language other than metaphor has no imaginative value. Her belief in the special significance of the poetic image as distinct from reference is related to the principle that a play should be regarded as a poem, since it excludes from consideration all except the most 'poetic' or figurative language.

Many other critics have concentrated on poetic imagery without having her special purposes, or avowing a belief in the unconscious origin of imagery. Perhaps their attitude is only a refinement of what is a fairly

commonplace critical concept, the distinction between  
poetry and prose,<sup>1</sup> the poetic and the prose image,<sup>2</sup>  
expressed thus by R. H. Fogle,<sup>3</sup> that in poetry,

each image is to bear a weight of  
which the prose image is free; it  
must not merely function as a part  
of the whole, but must in itself be  
whole and perfect, able to bear the  
severest scrutiny.

This distinction has been expressed in many ways, and  
usually as though it is a quite absolute distinction.  
So F. W. Bateson said that poetry employs the  
connotations of words as well as denotations, whereas  
prose only employs the latter,<sup>3</sup> thereby suggesting  
that only poetry can open up imaginative vistas, while  
prose has a fixed and limited meaning. J. H. Murry  
made the same distinction: "The imagery of poetry is  
in the main complex and suggestive; the imagery of

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<sup>1</sup> This distinction in the criticism of modern literature  
bears no relation to the differences between the  
language of poetry and prose in ancient literatures,  
e.g. Homeric or Anglo-Saxon. It may be connected with  
the concept of 'poetic diction', but this seems to have  
a special application to eighteenth century poetry,  
which, like ancient poetry, had a specialised vocabulary  
distinct from that of prose. The distinction discussed  
above is not one of vocabulary, but of imaginative value.

<sup>2</sup> The Imagery of Keats and Shelley, pp.16-17.

<sup>3</sup> English Poetry and the English Language, p.17.

prose single and explicit".<sup>1</sup> This concept was extended by Leone Vivante, who found it possible to distinguish between poetic and prosaic thought.<sup>2</sup>

It is the proper character of poetical, as opposed to prosaic thought, to rescue quality from being a mere attribute of the objectified and solidified symbol of its conditions and antecedents.

Though the distinction is often made, its implication that language and imagery are one thing in prose and something quite other in poetry does not seem always to be realised; for since both prose and poetry are terms for forms of language, and imagery, i.e. metaphor and simile occur in both, the distinction cannot be absolute, but only relative. It is clear for example that no absolute distinction, and often perhaps very little distinction at all, can be made between the connotative, emotional, or imaginative value of poetic prose such as Hamlet's speech on man, or the last chapter of Sir Thomas Browne's Urne Buriall, and the finest poetry.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Metaphor', p.234.

<sup>2</sup> English Poetry, pp.42-3.

The distinction between poetry and prose is paralleled by the division I. A. Richards made between what he called the two uses of language.

<sup>1</sup>  
He said:

A statement may be used for the sake of the reference, (i.e. scientific or historical judgment) true or false, which it causes. This is the scientific use of language. But it may be also used for the sake of the effects in emotion and attitude produced by the references it occasions. This is the emotive use of language.

It is doubtful whether the 'scientific' use of language is possible except perhaps in mathematical text-books, for as R. G. Collingwood<sup>2</sup> pointed out, emotion colours all spoken language, even what are usually called 'plain statements of fact'; according to the tone in which, and gesture, or lack of gesture, with which words are uttered. The written word, when read to oneself, is given an emotional colouring, both by the author, through his style, and even his punctuation, and by the reader, who

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<sup>1</sup>  
Principles of Literary Criticism, p.267; cf. p. 261: "There are two totally distinct uses of language".

<sup>2</sup>  
R. G. Collingwood, The Principles of Art, Oxford 1938, especially p.263ff; cf. J. Vendryes, Le langage, p.182: "Toujours l'affection enveloppe et colore l'expression logique de la pensée".

speaks the words silently to himself, again with a certain tone and inflexion. This division made by I. A. Richards has, however, provided a quasi-philosophical basis for the common distinction between poetry and prose, and reappears in various forms in other critical writings. So Kenneth Muir has said that language has two functions, "to convey thoughts and to express feelings"; for the one "an unemotive, precise language is required", for the other "the more scientifically precise we are, the greater the distortion".<sup>1</sup> A precise language, except in terms of mathematical symbols or scientific equations, is more or less impossible, since the meaning of words is not limited and precise, and again, words have an emotional aura, depending upon the manner in which they are used, the tone with which they are spoken, and on the associations which they have gathered during their history. The prose of fiction, of the orator, of the average newspaper, and the rhetorical prose of plays certainly do not form a scientific use of language, and this distinction between scientific and emotive language is not the same as, nor does it

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<sup>1</sup> 'The Uncomic Pun' in Cambridge Journal, 111 (May 1950), 472-85. The quotation is on p.485.

genuinely support, a distinction between poetry and prose.

However, it is perhaps on a basis of these distinctions between poetry and prose, the poetic and prose image, the emotive and scientific uses of language, that there arises the further concept, expressed by D. G. James,<sup>1</sup> who claimed that the "poetic consciousness"

is not concerned with history and actual sequence. The distinction therefore between lyrical and dramatic poetry is primarily formal, and does not reveal any essential difference of poetic process.

This suggests the principle cited at the beginning of this chapter, that a poetic play should be treated as a poem, but the point of immediate importance is his statement that the poetic consciousness is not concerned with "actual sequence". It is evident that the playwright must be concerned with history and actual sequence in the construction and plot of a play, if not in the individual speeches; and in so far as his language is related to the context, the action and the character speaking, that

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<sup>1</sup> Scepticism and Poetry, p. 118.

is, presumably in large measure in a good play, the poetry of individual speeches is modified. Thus there is at least this distinction between lyrical and dramatic poetry: the former is usually an expression of an author's personal feeling, open or disguised, and is unlimited except by the form which the author chooses, and by the necessity of giving enjoyment to individual readers, who have the option of reading a poem several times. The latter is bound by the exigencies of narrative, character portrayal, action, stage business, time sequence, and also by the fact that in addition to being read privately, it is to be spoken aloud to an audience who must comprehend at first hearing; in this way dramatic poetry has to serve several different levels of appeal and appreciation.

Another critical tenet which connects readily with the ideas so far discussed is the conception of I. A. Richards that the best poetry includes all the conflicting elements of a human experience.<sup>1</sup> This principle, perhaps arising from, certainly

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<sup>1</sup> Principles of Literary Criticism, pp. 249-51.



coinciding with the renewal of interest in the poetry of the 'metaphysicals', has been used to defend Donne's poetry against criticism such as that of Dr. Johnson:<sup>1</sup> "The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together". These heterogeneous ideas, or conflicting elements are yoked together in poetic imagery, in metaphor, and it is thus the imagery of the metaphysical poets which has received chief attention. Since it is by means of metaphor that conflicting ideas can be drawn together, the further idea has arisen that the value of a poem, at any rate a 'metaphysical' poem, lies in its imagery. Hence arose Cleanth Brooks's dictum regarding 'metaphysical' poetry, "The comparison [the image] is the poem in a structural sense".<sup>2</sup> Brooks himself has applied this dictum to a wide range of poetry in his Well Wrought Urn, and even where no such rigid dictum as this is applied, the stress on poetic imagery in present-day criticism may be due to the ideas propounded or suggested by Richards and others.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Samuel Johnson, 'Cowley' in Lives of the Poets, ed. G. Birkbeck Hill, Oxford 1908, Vol. I, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Modern Poetry and the Tradition, p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Chapter I, pp. 26-29, 32-4, 46-7, 80ff, 108ff.

This elevation of metaphor to the point where it becomes the poem, or at least contains the poem's value, is connected with the distinctions made between poetry and prose, the poetic and prose image, the emotive and scientific uses of language: for assuming, as many appear to do, that these distinctions have an absolute validity, then nothing could be more remote from the scientific use of language, from prose, than metaphor, which brings into play ambiguities of meaning and suggestion. This attitude is embodied in the dictum, which also derives from Richards and has been reaffirmed by the 'New' critics of America, that the language of poetry is paradox: in the words of O. J. Campbell, who criticised their views, they demand

..... that a poem be a coherent structure of images organized so artfully as to embody the essential imaginative significance of the work. Only through a proper understanding of this inner structure does a reader come to know all that a poem means and all that it is.

This is a succinct statement of an attitude by no means confined to the 'New' critics, though their habit of dogmatizing is comparatively rare. The

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<sup>1</sup> 'Shakespeare and the "New" Critics' in ed. J. G. McManaway, Giles E. Dawson, E. E. Willoughby, Joseph Quincy Adams Memorial Studies, Washington 1948, pp. 81-96. The quotation is on p. 81. of the essay by Cleanth Brooks, 'The Language of Paradox' in ed. Allan Tate, The Language of Poetry, Princeton 1942, pp. 37-61.

concept of imagery as supremely important in poetry led thus to the further view that the meaning of a poem is contained in its imagery.<sup>1</sup> The alliance of this view with the idea that there is only a formal difference between lyrical and dramatic poetry, would suggest that poetic imagery is the most important feature and embodies the meaning of poetic plays such as those of Shakespeare. Such a view was put forward by R. B. Heilman, who said of King Lear that its theme is established "only by means of patterns of imagery" and "in this imagery is contained the fullest statement of this tragic theme".<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Richards often seemed to deny meaning to poetry, as have many other writers (cf. Macleish, "A poem should not mean But be"; see above pp.32, 102n.), and regarded a poem as an emotive experience evoking attitudes. However, if the 'New' critics have diverged from his views in this respect, in their search for meanings, they owe to him their view that a poem may be studied in and for itself, without relation to anything outside it, presumably even its historical setting, or the historical meanings of the words employed. Richards said, "Every poem ... is a strictly limited piece of experience, a piece which breaks up more or less easily if alien elements intrude. We must keep the poem undisturbed by these or we fail to read it and have some other experience instead. For these reasons we establish a severance, we draw a boundary between the poem and what is not the poem in our experience". He also said, "Emotions are primarily signs of attitudes and owe their great prominence in the theory of art to this. For it is the attitudes evoked which are the all-important part of any experience" (Principles of Literary Criticism, pp.78, 132).

<sup>2</sup> This Great Stage, p.30.

Three ways have been observed by which critics have come to concentrate on poetic imagery, metaphor and simile. In the first place, many have believed that imagery wells up from the unconscious mind, and has a special evidential value in relation to an author's life, or a special imaginative value as distinct from non-figurative language. Secondly, the distinction frequently drawn between poetry and prose led to a further distinction being made between poetic imagery and prose imagery, and encouraged an interest in poetic imagery as the chief factor distinguishing poetry from prose. Thirdly, the belief that the essence of poetry is the integration of diverse aspects of experience, and that this unity is brought about by means of metaphor, a belief closely connected with the reinstatement of the poetry of the metaphysical poets, and the defence of modern poetry, has given impetus to the study of imagery. Whether this tendency to pay particular attention to poetic imagery derived from or preceded the idea that there is no distinction between lyrical or 'pure' poetry and dramatic poetry is not clear; certainly the two attitudes are connected. The fact that among dramatists it is predominantly Shakespeare whose imagery has been analysed may be connected with his long reputation as the greatest English poet.

(ii) Further Narrowing of Interest to the Subject-Matter Alone

In the criticism of poetic imagery in drama, chiefly Shakespearian criticism, the word 'image' has often signified only one term of the image, the subject-matter. When Miss Spurgeon<sup>1</sup> spoke of images as relating to the unconscious mind of the author, she meant not the poetic image as a whole, but its 'stuff' or subject-matter, the "word-picture" brought in to<sup>2</sup> "illustrate, illuminate and embellish his thought". Her concern was not with the artist's thought, the meaning of an image in its context, or the dramatic importance, but with the picture evoked by the subject-matter. For example:

To take arms against a sea of troubles  
And by opposing end them

Hamlet, III, i, 59-60.

she considered an image of war; in one sense this is true, and it might also be true to consider it as an image of the sea, but in its context it is also an image of suicide, and this is what gives it its rich significance in the play. Many critics discuss

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<sup>1</sup> of. Chapter I, p.36.

<sup>2</sup> Shakespeare's Imagery, p.9.

imagery in the same way, though often without having her special reasons and aims, to discover something about Shakespeare's life and the working of his mind. It is usual in fact to describe images according to their subject-matter or its source, that is, without relation to their context or often their true significance in a play.

This emphasis on the subject-matter of images appears to be related to the argument of D. G. James discussed in the previous section, that the poetic consciousness is not concerned with "history and actual sequence". But in drama, at any rate in such plays as Shakespeare's tragedies where image and action interfuse, both object-matter, the idea illustrated in the image, and subject-matter are frequently part and parcel of the history and sequence of events in the play, or are suggested by some element in plot or action. Another example is provided by the group of images Miss Spurgeon finds dominant in Hamlet, sickness images:

This physic but prolongs thy sickly days  
III,iii,96.

This image might well be a literal statement out of its context, and can only be understood in relation to its context, which includes both language and the action of Claudius who is kneeling in prayer. The

image relates to a specific point in the sequence of the play, and it might equally well be described as an image of guilty conscience. When the object-matter or subject-matter of an image depends upon time-sequence or plot in a play, then according to the point of view expressed by James, and implied by Miss Spurgeon it does not relate to the 'poetic consciousness', or what may be taken as a near equivalent, the author's imaginative vision.

Thus in order to discover the author's own imaginative vision, or his thought, the images may be detached from their context and considered in isolation.<sup>1</sup> This allows the critic to interpret images in any number of ways, particularly if he concentrates on the subject-matter, since the picture evoked is likely to be different for different people. This view also allows a critic to find the

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<sup>1</sup>cf. with regard to this the statement of R. H. Fogle cited above, p.122, that a poetic image "must in itself be whole and perfect, able to bear the severest scrutiny". cf. also W. Empson's dictum (Seven Types of Ambiguity, p.32) cited with approval by I. A. Richards (Philosophy of Rhetoric, p.125) that in poetry "statements are made as if they were connected, and the reader is forced to consider their relations for himself". This dictum of Empson's (which Fogle himself attacks) implies that the context of images, their relationships, are supplied by the reader. The context provided by the poet does not matter apparently.

meaning of a play solely in its poetic imagery, and particularly the subject-matter, and many tend to do this as already indicated.<sup>1</sup> Two further examples of ignoring context in the desire to discover Shakespeare's own intimate thought may be cited from Leone Vivante's essay.<sup>2</sup> He says of Hamlet's words "the pale cast of thought", that

whatever be their meaning with strict reference to the context, [they] seem to reflect, in their original expressive value, the proper quality of a high serenity, and of all-comprehensive truth ...

He also cites the following lines, spoken by the Friar in Romeo and Juliet:

Here comes the lady: O! so light a foot  
Will ne'er wear out the everlasting flint.  
A lover may bestride the gossamer,  
That idles in the wanton summer air,  
And yet not fall: so light is vanity;  
II.vi.16-20.

and attributes the first four lines to Shakespeare's own vision, the last to the Friar himself. "Most likely, the idea that it is vanity, and not spirit, which makes her so light must be left to the

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<sup>1</sup> cf. Chapter 1, p.85ff.

<sup>2</sup> Leone Vivante: English Poetry, pp.58, 51-52.



particular point of view of the Friar". Such analysis is very valuable often, but one-sided where the subject of study is a complex play; for an image derives its significance from its context of action as well as words, and often from its particular place in the time-sequence. Concentration on poetic imagery in such a way seems to be taken by P. A. Jorgensen to a limit beyond which it would be impossible to go:

It has been noted by Caroline Spurgeon that the leading images may subtly but insistently contradict the more obvious import of speeches and action. It is not carrying the play too much further into the scholar's study to assert that Shakespeare's intuition led him occasionally to a still finer subtlety; ... to a contradiction of the meaning carried by the pictorial images themselves. 1

The distinction between the subject-matter of imagery as representing the unconscious mind, the imaginative vision spontaneous and spiritual, and the object-matter or reference as relating to the conscious mind, unimaginative or trivial; and also the further view that in order to discover an author's imaginative vision images may be considered apart from context, are both suggested by G. Wilson

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<sup>1</sup> 'Vertical Patterns in Richard II', p.134.

Knight's conception of 'spatial' and 'temporal' elements in Shakespeare's plays.<sup>1</sup> He identified the 'spatial' element with the spiritual or atmospheric quality of the play, provided by a 'set of correspondences' throughout the play which relate to each other independently of time-sequence, or the action. The "spatial reality" is "ever the unique child of his [Shakespeare's] mind," however derivative the temporal element. Therefore:

We should ... be prepared to recognize ... both the 'temporal' and 'spatial' elements ... to relate any given incident either to the time-sequence of story or the peculiar atmosphere, intellectual or imaginative, which binds the play.

Wilson Knight did not identify this spatial-temporal opposition with an opposition between subject-matter and object-matter of imagery, but these two oppositions do correspond closely, since they both represent a larger distinction between the imaginative and non-imaginative, the spiritual and objective, or non-spiritual. The correspondence is worth noting because Wilson Knight's views have had much influence and because these distinctions

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<sup>1</sup> The Wheel of Fire, pp.3-16.

are all in their turn related to the various distinctions discussed in the previous section.

The temporal or 'story' element and the object-matter of imagery tend to be ignored, for the imaginative value of the play and vision of the author are often thought in this way to lie wholly in the 'spatial' element, or the subject-matter of imagery. For critics like Miss Spurgeon who are interested in exploring Shakespeare's imaginative vision, this raises the inevitable problem in a more than usually acute form of how to distinguish between an author's and one's own vision. For pictures evoked by the subject-matter of images differ from reader to reader; and since the usual definitions of imagery are vague, the number of images found varies from reader to reader. The subject-matter thus forms a very unstable basis for establishing an author's imaginative vision.

Another difficulty of this point of view is that no explanation has been offered why the 'temporal' or story element, the object-matter of imagery, and non-figurative language should not also be part of the author's imaginative vision. Even when the plot is borrowed, as in Macbeth, the story of the play differs from Holinshed's story, which has clearly been imaginatively reshaped by Shakespeare.

and to that extent is part of his imaginative vision. If the author's imaginative vision be conceived to lie in spiritual truths or values, these must be embodied in the play, and cannot be detached from the story, except as abstractions.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, since a play is a complex thing comprising action, stage effect, interplay between diverse characters, all imagined necessarily by a reader to some extent, as well as language, it seems idle to seek for an author's imaginative vision solely in a section, albeit the most imaginative section, of the language alone. Nor does it seem very satisfactory to seek for it in a 'spatial' element existing apart from the time sequence of a play; for example, in Macbeth the porter and his picturing of Macbeth's castle (in prose) as hell surely contribute to the play's peculiar atmosphere, and form part of the reality which is the 'unique child' of Shakespeare's mind, although existing only in relation to time-sequence. With regard to the dictum of Wilson Knight cited above, "any given incident" may and probably does relate both to the time-sequence of the story and the peculiar atmosphere, not to one or other.

Although what both Miss Spurgeon and Wilson

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<sup>1</sup> Some critics tend to do this; Wilson Knight, for example sees Troilus and Cressida as a conflict between intuition and reason (Wheel of Fire, p. 51).

Knight and their followers have to say is of great value, the oppositions they create between subject-matter and object-matter, 'spatial' and 'temporal' elements seem to derive from, and are more applicable to the study of poetry as distinct from drama. The first of these oppositions suggests that poetic imagery alone is important, the second that the story element is unimportant except as a framework on which may be superimposed a spiritual message, and seems to equate a Shakespearian play with an allegorical poem. Both of these oppositions seem to be extensions of and correspond to the distinctions already observed between poetry and prose, the poetic and prose image, and the emotive and scientific uses of language. The first is a further narrowing of these distinctions and like them applies to language alone. The second, however, was intended to have a special application to drama; but though there is a general truth expressed in this distinction between spatial and temporal elements in a play, it has been obscured by the rigid and dogmatic way in which the distinction has been used.

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of. Colin Still, Shakespeare's Mystery Play, London 1921: in this The Tempest was seen as an allegorical account of the mysteries of pagan initiation ceremonies. Wilson Knight acknowledged a debt to this book.

### (iii) Classification and Overall Patterns of Images

Images have usually been classified according to the source or sources of the subject-matter. This practice is related to the common divisions noted between poetic imagery (by which subject-matter alone is often meant) and prose imagery, poetry and prose, as representing the unconscious and conscious mind of the author, imaginative and non-imaginative writing. For the image is thus described in terms of a sensory experience postulated as having influenced the author's imagination: for instance, Macbeth's definition of sleep as "sore labour's bath" (II,ii,38)<sup>1</sup> was classified by Miss Spurgeon as a domestic image. Although Miss Spurgeon alone has classified in groups all Shakespeare's images for the special purpose of discovering facts about him, most Shakespearian critics describe images in this way, and refer to groups or patterns of images, meaning groups of which the subject-matter originates in the same source.

Thus images are commonly described with reference to the author's mind, and without reference

to the dramatic context, since it is the object-matter which forms the basic idea, being or thing, illustrated in the image, and relates the image to its context. This method of description is natural when the word 'image' retains a visual sense and refers to the mental picture evoked by the subject-matter of a metaphor or simile. However, there seems to be a tendency to regard this way of describing or classifying images as the only and a complete way of describing poetic images in the wider sense of metaphor and simile, for few critics make any distinction between the two common uses of the word 'image' represented in this paragraph, (a) as a general term to include metaphor and simile, and (b) as the mental picture evoked by the subject-matter. A critic like Miss Tive, who objected to Miss Spurgeon's classification and wished to classify<sup>1</sup> images according to their logical bases, is using the word in sense (a), whereas the usual classification is of images in sense (b).

It is evident that images in sense (a) may be classified in many ways, as suggested for example by

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery, p.264ff.

Miss Tuve or H. W. Wells. Images in the sense (b) may be considered in general in at least two ways, as relating to the author's mind, or as relating to the overall atmosphere of the play; these two ways are represented by the two parts of Miss Spurgeon's book, the first examining the light thrown by images on Shakespeare's life and mind, the second iterative patterns in the plays. Most Shakespearian critics speak in general of images in the sense (a), meaning metaphor and simile, but refer to groups or describe particular images in the sense (b), thus making a confusion in their terminology. Few have the particular aims of Miss Spurgeon, and there seems no reason why they should not consider images in a wider sense and from several points of view, instead of retaining the narrow method of classifying each image by subject-matter and restricting it to a single heading.

Images classified by subject-matter, i.e. independently of dramatic reference, fall into groups or patterns extending throughout a play, or what may be called overall patterns. It is these overall

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of. Chapter 1, pp.105, 5-7.



patterns, considered primarily in relation to the author's mind, with which most critics are concerned. Since what constitutes an image for one person is merely prosaic and unimaginative to another, critics may differ about what forms the dominant group of images in a play. Thus J. C. Maxwell, using the word image in a much wider sense than Miss Spurgeon, finds animal images the prevailing group in Coriolanus,<sup>1</sup> whereas for her body images formed the dominant group. A further danger implicit in the study of overall patterns is the tendency to rely on statistics. As noted above, Miss Spurgeon and R. D. Attiok were both forced to reject the statistical method on which they attempted to build their conclusions.<sup>2</sup> For not only may critics differ as to what constitutes an image, and therefore as to the number of images they find in a play, but their classification by subject-matter does not indicate which images are dramatically or emotionally important in the play. The largest group of images numerically may not be the dominant group emotionally in a play;

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<sup>1</sup> J. C. Maxwell: 'Animal Imagery in Coriolanus'. of. also e.g. the differing estimates of the imagery of Richard II by K. Muir and J. O'Loughlin, in The Voyage to Illiria; P. A. Jorgensen in 'Vertical Patterns in Richard II'; and C. F. E. Spurgeon in Shakespeare's Imagery, pp.222-3.

<sup>2</sup> of. Chapter 1, pp.38, 72 and note.

and what is generally dominant in Shakespeare's mind may not be important in a particular play. Miss Spurgeon tacitly admitted this, for although she found nature images to be numerically most prominent in Shakespeare's work, yet she felt sickness imagery, the fourth largest group in this play, to be dominant in Hamlet. However, as Miss Spurgeon did in general, many critics rely more or less on statistics, which in such a subjective business as literary criticism can only be a rough guide and support to other evidence.

Concentration on the overall patterns allows of many and often strange interpretations of images, for the subject-matter of an image considered out of its context may evoke different connotations in different people. Moreover to describe an image by its subject-matter alone may be to pick out what is least important in its context. For it is often possible to classify the subject-matter under several heads, and the choice of head must depend on the critic's personal feeling and aims. For example, Cleanth Brooks, <sup>1</sup> eager to

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<sup>1</sup> The Well-Wrought Urn, p.34. Walter Whiter thought this passage was drawn from the stage, since the appropriate dress of Tragedy personified was a pall of coarse material (blanket) and a knife (Specimen of a Commentary, p.155ff.)

enlarge the pattern of clothing images which Miss Spurgeon found dominant in Macbeth, would include in it "the blanket of the dark" (I,v,50), where "blanket" suggests rather the obscurity of the night and the bed on which Duncan is shortly to be murdered. On the other hand Miss Spurgeon classified:

Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of  
care  
II,ii,37

as a domestic image, although this might equally well have been placed in her dominant clothing group.<sup>1</sup> Neither she nor Cleanth Brooks have considered it in this way. There are many ways of relating and considering the images and their subject-matter, and all the views regarding these two images are valid to some extent. The concentration on subject-matter in overall patterns means however that an image is usually classified by any one critic under one particular head alone. The particular head may vary from critic to critic, and the view of any one critic is likely to be limited and lop-sided according to the head he chooses, and his interpretations unusual

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To a Jacobean audience this image may have suggested rather the picture of an emblematic figure, 'Care', though I have been unable to find any evidence for this.

in consequence.

Another possible danger arises where overall patterns are considered without regard to dramatic emphasis or the place of an image in the action. What is in reality a comparatively small group of images may come to assume for a critic an overruling importance in a play, or to embody a play's meaning, when most readers and listeners are hardly aware that it exists. If the two ways of regarding the subject-matter of imagery in general, in relation to the author's mind, and in relation to the play, be confused, as they sometimes are, then most varied and contradictory thoughts and opinions will be attributed to the author. Such contradictions may also result in part from the general limitations of a study of overall patterns pointed out above. Thus <sup>1</sup> H. T. Price stated that Shakespeare is the most pagan of the English poets, a conclusion based on a study of the imagery of Venus and Adonis in relation to that of the tragedies. <sup>2</sup> S. L. Bethell and G. Wilson Knight on

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'The Function of Imagery in Venus and Adonis' in Papers of The Michigan Academy of Science Arts and Letters, xxxi, 1946 (Published 1947), 275-97; see especially p.287.

2

Shakespeare and the Popular Dramatic Tradition, pp. 53-60; G. Wilson Knight, The Wheel of Fire, pp.80-106. Both these critics find a religious significance in many other of Shakespeare's plays.

the other hand suggested an intensely religious Shakespeare; the former has interpreted King Lear, the latter Measure for Measure, as Christian allegories.

Some of the results of focussing attention on poetic imagery, and more especially on the subject-matter of poetic imagery in drama have been noted here. Images are usually classified by subject-matter, which refers primarily to the author's mind and not to the play or context concerned. When critics refer to groups or patterns of images they mean groups in which the subject-matter in their view derives from the same source. Since such classification has no necessary reference to context, the numerical size of the groups bears no necessary relation to their dramatic importance, even if it does reflect the unconscious mind of the author. Images are usually classified or described under one head, for example as 'sea', 'war' or 'clothing' images, when many may be classified under several heads. The particular head a critic chooses depends upon his own tastes and aims, and what is a vivid image to one may be prosaic to another, so that an interpretation of a play, a commentary or appreciation based upon or largely upon the study of imagery in this way, is likely to be partial and one-sided.

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Classification by subject-matter and the consequent interest in overall patterns, are related to the view that poetic imagery contains the soul and meaning of poetry, a view extended to drama in this case. Many other factors in a play may be, and often are, ignored, the dramatic significance of images, their place in the action, their relation to the development of the action, or to a particular character. More important perhaps is the relation of subject-matter to object-matter or to non-figurative language, local patterns of word or image which may occur only at certain phases of the action, and the interrelation of image, description, and the use of properties and stage-effects. The prime difficulty lies however in what constitutes an image, whether a dramatic image may not be different from a poetic image, and include some of these other factors in a play.

#### (iv) Definitions of an Image

Poetic imagery is usually defined as embracing metaphor and simile, that is, as confined to highly figurative language, and it is in this sense that the term has been used throughout the preceding sections. One confusion in the use of the word 'image' was however pointed out in Section iii. Images are

frequently classified by subject-matter, and it is common to find reference to groups of images, by which are meant groups of images with related or common subject-matter. As a result of this concentration on subject-matter, the word 'image' comes to be used often to mean merely subject-matter. Thus two uses of the word are frequently confused in criticism, image as metaphor and simile, and image as referring specifically to one term of the metaphor or simile, the subject-matter. In actual fact many other meanings are often confused together in the word, particularly in the criticism of drama, but distinctions between these meanings do not seem to have been made.<sup>1</sup> Such distinctions are however clearly important in any discussion of imagery.

A third use of the word image is exemplified in Miss Spurgeon's supplementary definition,<sup>2</sup> "the little word-picture a poet uses to illustrate or embellish his thought". The "word-picture", that is, presumably,

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<sup>1</sup> A confusion in the meanings attached to the word 'image' was noted by Josephine Miles in a review of R. H. Fogle's The Imagery of Keats and Shelley entitled 'The Problem of Imagery' in Jewanee Review, lviii (Summer 1950), 522-6.

<sup>2</sup> Shakespeare's Imagery, p.9.



the mental picture evoked, is usually brought into a metaphor by the subject-matter, but these two meanings attached to 'image' (that is, word-picture and subject-matter) are not the same, though they may coincide. The idea of an image as visual, or at any rate appealing to one of the senses, is involved in this definition of an image as word-picture, and this idea seems to be common among critics, although several have pointed out that the poetic image, metaphor, does not necessarily have any sensory appeal.<sup>1</sup> This may have some connection with the non-specialized meaning of the word as a pictorial or descriptive representation of something. It may also be connected with the use of the word by the 'imagist' poets, whose method was to suggest their meaning by vivid phrases or passages of symbolic description rather than by the use of metaphor. The fourth of their six aims made clear the meaning they attached to the word:

To present an image. We are not a school of painters, but we believe that poetry should render particulars exactly and not deal with vague generalities. 2

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for example, S. J. Brown and I. A. Richards. of. Chapter 1, pp.10, 46.

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Cited in the introduction by Michael Roberts to The Faber Book of Modern Verse, 1936, p.15.

This is merely an amplification of T. E. Hulme's dictum, "Poetry ... always endeavours to arrest you, to make you continuously see a physical thing, to prevent you gliding through an abstract process". The concept of an image as word-picture, yet at the same time limited to metaphor and simile, may easily be confused with this concept of image as suggestive or symbolic description. No Shakespearian critic has attempted to establish a borderline between metaphor and suggestive description, and the difficulty is especially marked in Elizabethan drama, where description plays such a prominent part. Passages such as the description of Ophelia's death, or the following description of events connected with the murder of Duncan:

Ross: And Duncan's horses ...  
Beauteous and swift, the minions of their race,  
Turn'd wild in nature, broke their stalls,  
flung out  
Contending 'gainst obedience ...

Old Man: 'Tis said, they eat each other.

Ross: They did so, to the amazement of mine eyes.  
Macbeth, II, iv, 14-19

are not metaphorical, that is to say there is no comparison implied, or figure of words used (except

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T. E. Hulme: Speculations, London 1924. of. "The great aim is accurate, precise and definite description" (p.132).

the abstract figure "Contending 'gainst obedience"), but these lines provide 'word-pictures' and possess strong sensory appeal. There seems no doubt that many Shakespearian critics have included such passages among 'images', while retaining the usual sense of image as metaphor and simile.

Four meanings attached to the word 'image' in criticism have now been distinguished, as follows:

- a) Image as poetic image, or metaphor and simile (to which most tropes are reducible.)
- b) Image as the subject-matter, or one term, of metaphor and simile.
- c) Image as 'word-picture', a sense often equated with sense a) as though metaphor has necessarily a visual or sensory appeal.
- d) Image as suggestive or symbolic description.

The first three meanings are frequently and indiscriminately (that is, without any distinction being made between them) used by Shakespearian critics. The meanings c) and d) are easily confused, for the division between them is often difficult to determine, and many Shakespearian critics include descriptive passages among the poetic images they discuss. Confusion is perhaps only increased by critics such as J. C. Maxwell and R. D. Altick who extend the usual definition of poetic imagery to include reference and allusion.

The senses b) and c) may appear to be almost identical, but are in fact distinct. For not only does sense c), image as word-picture, extend beyond the bounds of metaphor, but metaphor may be the expression of a relation between abstractions, in which case the subject-matter is not a 'word-picture'. The following examples are from one speech of Hamlet's:

The hey-day in the blood is tame, it's humble  
And waits upon the judgment.  
III, iv, 69-70.

Sense to ecstasy was ne'er so thrall'd  
But it reserved some quantity of choice  
To serve in such a difference  
III, iv, 74-6

There are other common uses of figurative language in Shakespeare's plays which provide at most only a vague hint of a visual or sensory impression. Particularly common for instance is the faint personification of such passages as:

an act  
That blurs the grace and blush of modesty  
Hamlet, III, iv, 40-1.

Amazement on thy mother sits  
Hamlet, III, iv, 112.

Whereto serves mercy  
But to confront the visage of offence.  
Hamlet, III, iii, 46-7.

Whatever sensory image is suggested by such metaphors does not arise from the subject-matter, but from the relation between the terms; abstractions are made

vivid and alive by being endowed with activity, and it is through the bodily activity ("waits upon", "thrilled", "sits", "confront") expressed in the verb that the abstractions are humanized. But there is no pictorial personification, and it is difficult to see how such metaphors may be classified by their subject-matter, which has no sensory source. They are in fact to some extent ignored, even though by the definition 'metaphor and simile' they should come within the scope of poetic imagery.

Thus metaphor may, but need not, provide a 'word-picture', a sensory image; and a sensory image may be evoked by non-figurative language, by description. What most Shakespearian critics discuss, what is usually meant by a poetic image, is a metaphor which does provide a sensory image. Many metaphors, and non-figurative passages evocative of mental images tend to be ignored in discussions of poetic imagery in drama. The remarks made so far on this question of the definition of imagery apply equally well to poetry or drama, but there are special problems connected with drama which have not been considered.

In the first place, many passages in poetic drama are only metaphorical in relation to the action, or a property or stage effect; considered apart from their

context in the action, these passages appear to be literal statements. One example has been cited from Hamlet:

This physio but prolongs thy sickly days.  
where "physio" seems to refer to Claudius's action of praying. Another example is provided by the final scene in Antony and Cleopatra; when Cleopatra is ready for death she addresses the asp

Come, thou mortal wretch,  
With thy sharp teeth this knot intrinsicate  
Of life at once untie ... V.ii,306-8

and later, when Charmian cries out, she tells her to be silent:

Dost thou not see my baby at my breast  
That sucks the nurse asleep? V.ii,312-3

The personification of the first passage and the metaphorical value of the second only exist in relation to a stage property, an asp, and the action of Cleopatra in putting the asp to her breast. The editors of the Globe edition of Shakespeare's works thought it necessary to explain the first passage by adding a stage direction, "To an asp, which she applies<sup>1</sup> to her breast". Such figurative uses of language

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<sup>1</sup> There are many less familiar examples of this such as the opening of The Revenger's Tragedy, where Vindice's "Go, gray hayrde adultery" etc., is only explicable in relation to a procession across the stage.

are not possible in poetry, where what the metaphor relates to, and the terms of the metaphor, must be expressed in language. Passages like these are often included among poetic images, although they seem to belong to a different category, dramatic images.

Drama is further complicated because the audience is offered what may be called direct visual images by the stage, the movement, gestures and costumes of actors, stage effects, which may be visual or aural, and properties. Most of these necessarily have to be imagined or visualized by a reader in order to read a play intelligently. Through the language connected with it, and its place in the action, an effect or property may come to embody a whole set of relationships, in fact, to be vitally 'figurative' itself. Such imaginative effects as the knocking on the door in Macbeth, the use of gold in Timon of Athens, of a skull in Tourneur's Revenger's Tragedy, ease the dramatist's task, for what might have taken much figurative language to express may be summed up in one significant effect or property. Hence perhaps Miss Spurgeon's note that there is only one image derived from gold in Timon of Athens; there was no necessity for Shakespeare to present an image of gold and its significance in metaphor, since gold was already

'imaged' by its presence on the stage. So many of the fine descriptive metaphors, images of night, storms, etc. might not have appeared in Elizabethan plays had there been more adequate stage facilities.

To return to poetic imagery in its usual sense of metaphor and simile, there is one further problem which has already been touched upon in previous sections, but which no critics seem to have tackled. It was pointed out that the usual way of classifying images is by subject-matter, and that although the subject-matter may often be classified under several heads, the usual practice seems to be to classify under one head, the head varying according to the critic's interest. Many have in point of fact taken over Miss Spurgeon's classification, which is of this kind. Wherever a mixed metaphor occurs, and often with regard to simple metaphors, such classification is arbitrary. Another example may be cited:

(an act / That ...) takes off the rose  
From the fair forehead of an innocent love  
And sets a blister there.

Hamlet, III, iv.  
40-2.

This may be classified as a flower image, or a sickness image, while the near-personification of love might also be considered as evoking a mental image.



It is evident that one poetic image (metaphor) may contain two or several 'images' or word-pictures. The converse is also possible, that one word-picture, e.g. the description of Ophelia's death, may contain several metaphors, although this is using 'word-picture' in a wider sense than that it usually has. If the classification of images is arbitrary in this way, then the counting of images is also arbitrary; this provides another argument against too great reliance on statistics.

In this section the confusion with regard to what constitutes a poetic image, has been discussed. Four meanings commonly attached to the word 'image' in poetry have been pointed out, meanings not distinguished by critics in their discussion. Drama seems to be a special case in the discussion of imagery, since language may be metaphorical only through its relation to the action, and also because direct visual and auditory 'images' are presented to the audience or reader without the medium of words; neither of these features is possible in poetry. Finally it has been noted that most critics seem to regard a metaphor as a single image, when it may present several distinct images or word-pictures.

### (v) Conclusion

In the first three sections of this chapter certain common aspects of the study of imagery were discussed, the concentration on poetic imagery; the fact that discussion of poetic imagery, usually defined as metaphor and simile, is often limited to one term of metaphor or simile, the subject-matter; the classification of images by subject-matter, and the tendency to examine them in overall patterns, without any necessary relation to context. The concentration on the poetic imagery of Shakespeare's plays is connected with the general principle cited at the beginning, that poetic plays can only be examined satisfactorily as poems. This approach to drama is further allied with a whole series of distinctions between poetry and prose, poetic and prose thought, the poetic and prose image, emotive and scientific language, a series, which appears to culminate in the distinction between the subject-matter and object-matter of imagery. These distinctions seem in every case to be based on the view that the first element of each pair has always a high imaginative value, a spiritual worth which is quite denied to the second element. Something of the process by which the first of these distinctions

came to be narrowed into the last, by the elevation of metaphor into a supreme place in poetry, as the chief factor distinguishing it from prose, has been indicated. In specific relation to drama, a further distinction related to those listed has been examined, the division between the 'spatial' or spiritual elements and 'temporal', story, or what may be called prose elements in a play. Finally the critical confusion with regard to the definition of an image was discussed, and certain special problems connected with drama pointed out.

This discussion and criticism of common critical attitudes indicates the desirability of extending the definition of imagery beyond its usual narrow limits of such metaphors and similes as evoke a mental image, a definition which, as shown in the last section, can easily be confused with other meanings of the word 'image'. The next chapter will be concerned to examine the nature of the poetic image, especially in relation to drama.

## CHAPTER 3

### Poetic Imagery

## POETIC IMAGERY

It is evident that the oppositions discussed in the last chapter between prose and poetry, scientific and emotive language, poetic and prose thought and imagery, are valid to a certain degree. Poetry, it is generally agreed, is the most intense and imaginative form of literary expression. At the same time, no absolute divisions can be made; much verse is unimaginative, much prose highly imaginative. It would seem rather that there is a slow gradation from the highest poetic flight down to the abstract symbols of science, and only these last are perhaps completely lacking in evocative power. The concentration of attention on poetic imagery however, has led to the further assumptions that the poetic imagery (metaphor and simile) of a work embodies the author's imaginative vision, and that only the subject-matter of that imagery is really important as welling up from the unconscious mind, which is conceived as the mainspring of the imagination. Before going on to discuss dramatic imagery it is pertinent to examine the nature of poetic imagery more closely.

### (1) Metaphor and Simile

Metaphor and simile, even when considered as including other figurative expressions, are not by

any means the only powerful imaginative element in poetry. A notable part in the creation of the poetic effect is played by incantation, rhythm and repetition, especially in poetry which is to be read aloud or sung. Poetry has connections with folklore, and age-old myths are constantly being re-embodied in a new idiom, as for example in Milton's Paradise Lost, or more recently, the Fisher-King legend in T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land. Such things in themselves seem to have a deep-seated and permanent imaginative quality. It is indeed possible for very good poetry to be almost bare of poetic imagery in its usual sense; a good example is Coleridge's The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, which has little metaphor, except for the personification of the sun, and relatively few similes. It uses the devices mentioned above, repetition, incantation, and has a strong rhythm, and according to Maud Bodkin<sup>1</sup> is a vivid and new incarnation of an enduring myth; certainly it is highly imaginative, but this

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<sup>1</sup> Archetypal Patterns in Poetry, pp.35 et seq. In The Road to Xanadu, New York 1927, a brilliant analysis of the sources of The Ancient Mariner. J. L. Lowes indicated the basis of the poem's vividness and power of suggestion.

imaginative quality evidently lies in the story it tells, its descriptive power, the characterisation, the deep levels of meaning which lie beneath the surface, and other characteristics, not in its metaphor. Many other examples might be cited, including much of Chaucer's poetry, much of Wordsworth's, and much modern verse - all these depend for their effect on evocative description rather than on poetic imagery. It seems clear then that metaphor need not be used to embody the poet's imaginative vision, and may not even be essential to poetry, at least to all kinds of poetry.

It is worth considering therefore what the poetic image, taken in its common sense as metaphor and simile, does perform. The poetic image has eluded adequate definition, but some points can be added to the accepted definitions. The name itself is clearly misleading, as having no specific relation to metaphor; the bare narrative of Chaucer, of Shelley's "I met a traveller in an antique land", and the description of T. S. Eliot's lines:

I grow old ... I grow old  
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled  
Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare  
to eat a peach?  
I shall wear white flannel trousers, and  
walk upon the beach.  
The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.

convey pictorial images which are completely

satisfactory. Thus the definition of an image<sup>1</sup> as "a picture made out of words" is inadequate, since simple description, or what might be termed symbolic description, as in the four lines quoted which have a deeper meaning than the literal sense, can equally well evoke a picture in the mind. But this definition is inadequate not only as being not specific, but as being too limited, for a poetic image may have little or no sensory appeal, and sometimes visualisation by the reader may be irrelevant or absurd. This is true, for example, of the 'radical' imagery of the metaphysical poets; the subject-matter of the image, e.g. Donne's famous pair of compasses, may have no emotional value or sensuous appeal, and as has been observed,<sup>2</sup> it is the thought expressed in such images, the "making psychological action clear by expressing it in

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<sup>1</sup> The definition of C. Day Lewis, *op. cit.* Chapter I, p.112; many others, notably Miss Spurgeon, have adopted this as a definition.

<sup>2</sup> Alice S. Brandenburg, 'The Dynamic Image in Metaphysical Poetry', *PMLA*, lvii (December 1942), 1044. The term 'radical' as descriptive of images in which the subject-matter has little or no sensuous appeal, was first used by H. W. Wells, *op. cit.* Chapter I, pp.5-6.



terms of physical action" which gives them coherence and meaning. A further reason why this definition is insufficient is that it refers in many instances to one term of the image only, usually the subject-matter.

The other common way of defining a poetic image is as a relation between the terms, a perception of hidden analogies, or "the intuitive perception of similarity in dissimilarities".<sup>1</sup> This again is an unsatisfactory definition; the perception of an analogy, however widely dissimilar the objects concerned, does not necessarily make a poetic image. Thus there is nothing figurative in the expressions "The sun is as red as blood", or "That house is as high as a telegraph pole" - both are literal statements.<sup>2</sup> To say "That house is as high as heaven" does however constitute a figurative expression, but its imaginative quality has little to do with any

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<sup>1</sup> J. Middleton Murry, 'Metaphor' in ed. Bradby, Shakespeare Criticism 1919-36, p.226.

<sup>2</sup> The distinction between a simple comparison as non-figurative and a simile as intensifying a quality or action to an indefinite high degree" (p.11) was observed by T. Hilding Svartengren in his Intensifying Similes in English, Lund, Sweden, 1918.

perceived similarity between the terms. Indeed the first two expressions convey an exact image, and the analogy is the most important factor in understanding them, whereas the last expression conveys only a vague image, if any, and what analogy there is seems unimportant. The first two convey information about the colour of the sun, the height of the house, but the last intensifies the quality of the house, gives it an emotional aura, and tells us about the feelings of the person looking at it, or what we should feel if we saw it. The essence of the poetic image would not seem to lie in the perception of analogy.

One further definition may be noted, that of S. J. Brown,<sup>1</sup> who made a lengthy and astute analysis of metaphor, finding that "in its most characteristic and distinctive form it is the using of material objects as images of immaterial, spiritual things", an idea more commonly expressed as the presentation of the abstract through the concrete image. This approaches nearer the centre of the problem, but it is a definition which would include many lines not

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<sup>1</sup>The World of Imagery, p.17-18.

commonly regarded as metaphorical; it would for example include what has been termed above symbolic description. The lines quoted from The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock would seem to have this power of suggesting the spiritual state of the hero of the poem, and certainly the narrative of The Ancient Mariner would come within its scope. In addition the material or concrete image is not necessary in a poetic image; it may only be implied, or it may not be present at all.

Although none of these definitions of a poetic image, as a word picture, as the perception of analogy, as the presentation of the spiritual through the material, is adequate, all have a measure of truth, and it is perhaps impossible to achieve more than partial success in treating so profound a problem. Before attempting any further definition, some of the main characteristics of metaphor and simile should be noted. Firstly, in the poetic image two or more ideas are brought into relationship; one is the basic idea underlying the image, the

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<sup>1</sup> of. Chapter II, p.154.

other a term imported, or substituted for the literal statement of what is meant, which expands or illuminates emotionally the basic idea. In a simile the terms are explicitly related; in a metaphor often identified. The relationship need not be analysed, or even consciously perceived by the reader in order to understand and enjoy the image; thus it is not necessary to expand "Your words will sting" (Revenge's Tragedy, II,1,150) to "your words will hurt his mind as a sting would his body" in order to understand this image. Indeed, the fact that a relationship is implied in this image need not be noticed. Secondly, as already implied, emotional power is a characteristic of the poetic image; the relationship between the terms is made not to direct attention to the analogy, or necessarily to suggest a mental image, but in order to give an emotional quality to the basic idea, and thereby, through this association, to enlarge, or at least to direct, its meaning. It seems that the stronger the feeling involved, the more remote may be the point of contact between the terms in order for the image to be effective; it may be due to this that mixed metaphors, such as Hamlet's:

Or to take arms against a sea of troubles ...  
III,1,59

are sometimes brilliantly effective. Thirdly, this emotional power is linked with compression of language; without the intensity compression would be unnecessary. Thus to express a poetic image in prose usually requires many more words than the image contains. This seems equally true of metaphor and simile; the long epic simile may be as powerfully impressive in its context as the short pithy metaphor. The difference between the two seems to be one of emotional pitch, and it is notable that one is common in long narrative, reflective or epic poetry, the other in shorter, more intense forms, in much lyric verse, in the drama, which is a succession of short passages given to different characters, and especially tragedy, which is keyed at a very high emotional level. Fourthly, the poetic image to be successful needs to have sufficient sensuous appeal or novelty to arrest the reader's attention and stir his imagination. A means to achieve this is by the presentation of a lively visual or kinaesthetic image, and another means is by giving movement to something immobile or dead. It is because of this requirement that so-called 'dead metaphors', of which the language is largely constituted, cease to have poetic value

in themselves.<sup>1</sup> Lastly, the terms of the image have to be appropriate to each other to the extent that the basic idea (object-matter) is emotionally realised and illuminated; such appropriateness seems to be governed by the force of the image and its context, and no limits can be stated. The point of contact between the terms must be emotionally fitting, but may be quite remote, and only terms which have no point of contact at all, if there are such, cannot be combined in a poetic image.

If these points, most of which are commonplace, be allowed, then it may be possible to frame a rough definition of a poetic image, metaphor and simile, in the following terms: an image is a relationship, though not necessarily an analogy, explicit or implied between two or more terms, made so that one term (the object-matter) is given an emotional colouring,

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They may, of course, be brought to life again by use in a new context, as witness the startling use of cliché in much modern poetry. The view has been taken that our language consists now almost entirely of dead metaphor, and is quite unsatisfactory for poetry, regarded as an involuntary activity and natural to primitive societies only; cf. F. C. Prescott's The Poetic Mind and Owen Barfield's Poetic Diction. A distinction between "conscious or 'living' metaphor and unconscious or 'dead' metaphor" was made long ago by H. W. Fowler, The King's English, second edition, Oxford 1906. (Significantly, his view of the relationship of metaphor to the conscious mind was exactly opposite to that of Miss Spurgeon). cf. also A. Clutton-Brook, 'Dead Metaphors' in S.P.E. Tract xi, Oxford 1922, pp.11-15.

and its imaginative meaning, though not often its literal sense, is expanded through its association or identification with the other term or terms (the subject-matter). In contrast to what may be called the aesthetic definitions cited above, this is strictly a functional definition, an approach to the mechanics of the poetic image. Though more exclusive than these others, it is still not a definition of metaphor and simile alone, at least as these are commonly understood. For it would include allegory in the sense in which the Elizabethans understood it, as continued metaphor, where an abstract concept is personified and given continuous life throughout a poem, and personification, the identification of the inanimate with a human being, which can be one of the most intense kinds of image. It would also include symbolic description or narrative, which in The Ancient Mariner and The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock seems to be a kind of sustained subject-matter; in other words the main term of the image, the object-matter, the spiritual experience of the heroes of these poems is implied or suggested through actions attributed to them. Thus this definition, like the others cited, cannot be confined to the short metaphor and simile, but suggests that whole poems, or passages of

description may have the qualities, certainly the chief qualities, of the poetic image. It may be then that even for the discussion of non-dramatic poetry the usually accepted meaning of the term 'poetic image' may not be adequate.

(ii) Two Kinds of Imagery

This fresh definition does, however, avoid the faults of concentrating attention solely on the word picture, or on the perception of analogy. These two very common ways of defining an image have a large measure of truth in them. They seem to derive from the common assumption that imagery is indivisible; that is to say, that all images have the same characteristics. Because of this assumption, there has been some confusion among those critics who have found it necessary to explain the difference between the imagery of Donne and the Metaphysical poets, and that of certain romantic poets, such as Keats, or Marlowe. For, as observed many years ago by H. W. Wells<sup>1</sup> and by many others since, the typical 'radical' imagery of Donne's poetry has subject-matter of little or no sensuous appeal, and regarded sensuously,

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<sup>1</sup>Poetic Imagery, pp.121, 124.



according to Alice S. Brandenburg, appears absurd. On the other hand, the sensuous quality of Keats' imagery is apparent.

This difference has frequently been explained in one of three ways. Often it has been considered a functional difference, usually with the implication (at least in modern criticism), that the imagery of Donne is entirely functional, whereas sensuous imagery is merely decorative. The last quoted critic takes this view, contrasting the 'dynamic' imagery of the metaphysical poets with the 'static' imagery of the Elizabethan sonnetteers. Sometimes the explanation has been that it is merely a difference in quality, that the imagery of the metaphysical poets is good, while that of many other poets is inferior: the functional-decorative contrast suggests this, and to defenders or exponents of Donne and his followers it has often seemed that Donne's unique quality lay in his use of imagery. A more ingenious explanation has been put forward by Cleanth Brooks in his Well Wrought Urn, in which he sets out to show that the paradox common in Donne's verse is also the keynote of all good poetry; in other words that radical imagery occurs in all good verse. The attempt is not very successful, particularly when he discusses

a poem of Tennyson, even though his criticism is often penetrating.

None of these explanations is satisfactory; it is probably a valid dictum that the imagery of all good poetry is functional, and there is no reason to believe that the imagery of Donne is better than that of other poets. There seems to be no doubt that the difference observed by these critics is real. The imagery of some writers is sensuous, evoking mood or feeling through the mental picture suggested; in the imagery of other writers sensory appeal seems unimportant. For instance, in the images

Put rancours in the vessel of my peace.  
Macbeth III.1.67

The thought of him rubs heaven in thy way  
Revenger's Tragedy III.v.224

Or to take arms against a sea of troubles  
Hamlet III.1.59

the sensuous effect, the picture suggested, is either absurd or irrelevant to the meaning of the image. These images give direct imaginative expression to ideas or relationships, and are successful in so far as they make these ideas intensely realised by the reader. On the other hand in the image

But look, the morn, in russet mantle clad,  
Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastward hill.  
Hamlet I.1.166

the sensuous effect is important and relevant to

the meaning of the image, which aims at evoking a mood or atmosphere, not expressing an idea, and is intended to be descriptive. The one may be called an image of thought, the other an image of impression. Both may be functional in their context, according to the aim of the passage in which they occur. Thus the image just quoted from Hamlet has a specific purpose which is to bring a sense of relief, perhaps of beauty, after the first appearance of the Ghost.

This division is a very rough one. Very few images in good poetry are simply impressionistic; the one cited from Hamlet has a deeper than surface meaning in its context, in expressing relief from tension. The long simile of epic and narrative verse, symbolic description, the continued metaphor of allegory, all have the quality of this kind of imagery; they present a picture which is interesting in itself, but which suggests or evokes a deeper meaning, and the deeper meaning is most significant. The image may be atmospheric, giving the emotional key to a certain situation; it may express the situation as well, as for instance in the following simile

from Wordsworth's Resolution and Independence, which expresses the intimate relationship Wordsworth sensed between an old man he had met and his natural surroundings:

As a huge stone is sometimes seen to lie  
Couched on the bald top of an eminence;  
Wonder to all who do the same espy  
By what means it could thither come, and whence;  
So that it seems a thing endued with sense,  
Like a sea-beast crawled forth, that on a shelf  
Of rock or sand reposes, there to sun itself;

Such seemed this man ...

It may also, as in the case of the continued 'image' of Prufrock or The Ancient Mariner, express a whole set of complicated ideas and relationships. Such images, in contrast to images of thought, give indirect imaginative expression to ideas and relationships; they work by suggestion or evocation, and their immediate appeal is the sensuous mental image; on the other hand images of thought seem to work by bringing directly to life, making vivid, often making concrete, the idea concerned, and their immediate appeal is their vigour and novelty.

It may well be that these two categories do not include all imagery in poetry, and it is possible that much of the finest and most memorable imagery in poetry has something of the qualities

of both. However, they do provide a general distinction, and many critics seem to have defined imagery according to their interest in one category or the other. Some indication of its validity is provided by examining the contrasting ways in which images of thought and images of impression appeal, by vigour and novelty, and by sensory evocation. It is often said that metaphor must be constantly made new, and it has been often observed that dead metaphor is alien to poetry. If the distinction made above is valid, then these remarks should apply rather to images which need vigour than to those which make their appeal to the senses. This seems to be the case, for it is notable that many objects of sensory appeal, aspects of the natural world for example, such as the sun, the moon, the sea, the desert, may be used again and again in the same way in imagery without losing freshness; for their appeal is permanent. Many such objects gather deeper associations with repeated use, and become of permanent metaphorical value. An obvious example is the rose, which has become a permanent metaphor.

suggesting beauty, high colour, freshness of youth,  
and perhaps the sense of swiftly fading beauty:

Emelye, that fairer was to sene  
Than is the lylie upon his stalke grene  
And fresher than the May with floures newe-  
For with the rose colour stroof hire hewe.

Chaucer, The Knight's Tale, 1036-8

Diaphenia, like the spreading roses,  
Henry Chettle, Damelus' Song to his  
Diaphenia

Red as a rose was she,  
Coleridge, The Ancient Mariner

O when her life was yet in bud  
He too foretold the perfect rose,  
Tennyson, In Memoriam, CXXXI

Like the rose at morning shunting of red joys  
And redder sorrows fallen from young veins and  
heart-springs  
Edith Sitwell, Harvest

The sensory appeal of such things is a new experience  
for every generation.<sup>1</sup> The image of thought, on  
the other hand, such as the radical imagery of Donne,  
has to be continually renewed, and originality is a  
hallmark of its value.

### (iii) Relation of the Poetic Image to Non-figurative Language

A consideration of a practical definition of the

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of, also the use of the rose as a symbol in T. S.  
Eliot's Four Quartets.

poetic image has shown that unless such a definition be limited to e.g. 'a short figurative expression in language', or an equivalent phrase which tells nothing about the nature and functions of an image, then such things as symbolic description must be included, thus extending the boundaries of the poetic image beyond the usually accepted definition as simple metaphor and simile. Two general kinds of image have been noted, one the image of thought, usually a short terse metaphor or simile, the other the image of impression, which may be long, may even extend throughout a poem. The question remains as to the place of non-figurative expression in poetry.

Even if this suggested extension of the meaning of 'poetic image' is accepted, the great majority of poetic images are still metaphors and similes. This extension does, however, suggest the difficulty of fixing a borderline between figurative and non-figurative expression, and points the inadequacy of regarding metaphor and simile as the sole imaginative elements in poetry. Almost inevitably in any discussion of the subject, imagery, which term will be used throughout the rest of this section in its common

sense as metaphor and simile, is treated in isolation from its context. This context is important, for it directs, perhaps emphasises and enlarges the associations of an image. Moreover the non-metaphorical language in the context may carry over the associations and meaning of an image. In this way it is possible for single words, through use in, or association with, powerful images, to retain this metaphorical linkage when they appear elsewhere used literally. In a sense non-figurative passages may become charged with a figurative meaning. This would seem to be particularly liable to happen where the poetry maintains an intense emotional level. It also occurs in poetry for speaking, as in the ballad, in which repetition and echo form a stock device. Poetic drama, especially tragedy, which combines both of these features, might be expected to have as a marked characteristic the spilling over of the metaphor into non-figurative language and iterative words which come to have a symbolic value; and this is a notable feature of Shakespearian tragedy.

Apart from words or ideas which come to have



a symbolic quality through association in a particular poem, that is, an arbitrary symbolism, there is a large number of words

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'Symbolism' is an unfortunate word in this context, for a symbol, strictly speaking, is "Something that stands for, represents, or denotes something else; (not by exact resemblance, but by vague suggestion, or by some accidental or conventional relation); esp. a material object representing or taken to represent something immaterial or abstract ..." (N.E.D., Symbol, sb<sup>1</sup> 2). Thus symbols are always arbitrary; this definition, however, takes no note of the difference between symbols such as x (e.g. let x equal the height of a building) in mathematics, or red light indicating danger, and a symbol such as the rose. The first two are quite arbitrary in the sense that 'y' or a green light would do equally well (as long as all know what the symbol stands for); the 'rose' too is arbitrary, but differs from these others in two respects, firstly in that the rose has a sensuous appeal of its own, and secondly in that a multitude of associations has been woven around it over the centuries. The first two have no value in themselves, are merely signs, and signs for one thing only; the last has a value and meaning of its own, and also represents several things - beauty, especially of women, high colour, love and all fine things that must pass away.

Evidently there is a difference here. Signs or objects, x, a green light, may be symbols. Therefore all words are symbols for some more or less definable meaning. The word 'rose' is a symbol for a particular species of plant and its flower. But the rose itself as object may also be symbolic, as noted above. Thus not only may symbols be either quite arbitrary (i.e. have no meaning in themselves, only as representing something else) or have a dual meaning, but when e.g. a rose is said to be a symbol, it is really a symbol in two ways, as object and as a word.

Thus the word symbol is confusing and has been avoided as far as possible; instead the terms 'symbolic description' or 'symbolic word' have been used. They are intended to indicate passages or terms which by special (i.e. arbitrary) association in a poem, or through age-old

which have acquired by time-honoured use a wealth of association; or which, by their permanent attraction as natural objects, retain a permanent figurative value. Thus the word 'rose' considered earlier can be used in an apparently literal sense, and yet retain the associations, which it has so often had, with human beauty and life. It is the immediate

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association, come to represent something else, while at the same time retaining a sensory appeal and a meaning of their own. These are poetically symbolic, and correspond to poetic images, i.e. images of impression, in their mode of action. For images of impression suggest or imply a deeper meaning which is arrived at through the sensory impression; symbolic words commonly relate to natural phenomena (rose, moon, light, darkness), and the deeper meanings they suggest are ever fresh by being renewed in the natural world, while also enriched by tradition; symbolic description acts in the same way as the image of impression, except that when the meaning it evokes is arbitrarily imposed by the poet, it may come to be used rigidly and lose imaginative appeal and richness of meaning by falling to the level of a strict symbol.

The terms used here then are intended to exclude strict symbols, those cases where the term used as a symbol lacks sensuous appeal or any surface meaning, or where the surface meaning has merged with the secondary meaning and been lost, a process continually going on, and producing dead metaphors.

recognition of these associations that gives to William Blake's poem its power as expressing some deep psychological truth.

O rose, thou art sick!  
The invisible worm  
That flies in the night  
In the howling storm,

Has found out thy bed  
Of crimson joy,  
And his dark secret love  
Does thy life destroy.

It is these associations, and perhaps others deriving from The Romance of the Rose, and its significance on medieval allegory, which make Herrick's line "Gather ye Rose-buds while ye may", immediately intelligible as something more than advice to pick flowers. The permanent metaphorical value of this and many other words such as isle, moon, sea, bright and so on, have been discussed by G. H. W. Rylands.<sup>1</sup> It is evident that to distinguish a metaphorical or symbolical use of such words from their literal use would in many instances be very difficult;

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<sup>1</sup> Words and Poetry, pp. 50ff. W. H. Auden's recent study of the symbolic value of certain ideas, especially sea, desert and city, in The Enchafed Flood, London 1951, is also interesting in this connection.

indeed, in the heightened language of poetry it would be very difficult for an author, as certainly few would desire it, to avoid making use of these associations.

Another element of non-figurative language in poetry is description, which has already been considered in its symbolical use in such a poem as The Love-song of J. Alfred Prufrock, where the whole poem is, as it were, the continued subject-matter of a metaphor; the object-matter, the spiritual state of Prufrock, is suggested through this description, not stated. The poetic power of such an apparently straightforward statement as

In the room the women come and go  
Talking of Michelangelo

derives from this unstated relationship. Such description may form the basis for a whole poem, and seems to occur frequently in longer poems, the narrative, the epic, the elegiac. Description of nature for its own sake is probably alien to good poetry; it is interesting in relation to the feeling and human associations involved. There is much description of this kind in, for example, Wordsworth's The Prelude; in its most potent use, it may contain the whole or much of

the meaning of the poem, or it may be used merely to evoke atmosphere, as in the opening stanza of Gray's Elegy in a Country Churchyard:

The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea,  
The ploughman homeward plods his weary way

It frequently occurs in short passages in the poetic drama of Shakespeare, but not in the extended form common in poetry.

All these features of poetry demonstrate the difficulty of fixing a borderline between the figurative and non-figurative in poetry. They show also that metaphor and simile are not the only imaginative element in poetry, and that to consider these two alone as constituting poetic imagery does not fulfil any of the usual definitions of this term. Using imagery in the wider sense suggested above, it may be said that metaphor and simile form the briefest, most vivid and emotionally the most intense kind of poetic image, and therefore perhaps deserve special attention, but that there are many other kinds of expression which seem to act in the same way as metaphor, and should be noticed in a discussion of poetic imagery.

(iv) Subject-matter and Object-matter

If it is in the nature of poetic imagery, in the sense of metaphor and simile, to bring or fuse its terms into a relationship, then for the purposes of critical appraisal no dichotomy should be made between subject-matter and object-matter; for it is the emotional realisation of the object-matter through this relationship which is of significance. The preceding discussion shows, however, the complexity of this question. For the subject-matter of the image of impression often exists in its own right as providing an imaginative picture, as in the simile from Wordsworth's Resolution and Independence<sup>1</sup> cited earlier. In this image the object-matter is the baldly prosaic "Such seemed this man ..."; the subject-matter seems to carry all the weight of the image, and it may be detached and discussed separately. In the image of thought on the other hand the subject-matter is often stated as baldly as the object-matter here; the force of the expression linking the two gives the image its power, and the subject-matter cannot be detached and

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<sup>1</sup>See above, p.177.

examined as though it were the whole image. The following are examples:

And reason panders will

Hamlet. III, iv, 88

Virtue itself of vice must pardon beg,

Hamlet. III, iv, 154

As observed earlier, even where the image of thought provides some sort of picture, that picture lies within the relationship of the terms, cannot be detached, and is frequently irrelevant or unnecessary for understanding the image. This is true of these further examples also from Hamlet:

Offences' gilded hand may shove by justice,

III, iii, 58

an act

That blurs the grace and blush of modesty

III, iv, 40-1

For this reason the mental picture suggested by such an image may be of no emotional value, and of little or no evocative power in itself, though it be vivid. In Donne's image of the unity of lovers' souls:

If they be two, they are two so  
As stiff twin compasses are two  
Thy soul the fixed foot makes no show  
To move, but doth, if th' other do.

A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning

the compasses express the idea of linkage, and have no emotional value in themselves; it is only within the framework of the whole image that they have any significance. In many images of thought, then, there is no subject-matter in the sense of a part

of the image which provides a mental picture having sensory appeal and capable of being detached and discussed apart from the object-matter.

Again, there occur many images of impression where the object-matter itself is of a sensory or emotional nature, such as the image of dawn quoted from Hamlet:

the morn in russet mantle clad  
Walks o'er the dew ...

Here the emotional power of the image lies in the evocation of atmosphere, its relation to human feeling and is governed by its context. The whole image, object-matter and subject-matter together, provides an imaginative picture, but it is in this case the object-matter, the dawn, which is the basis of that picture. This is another kind of image the subject-matter of which cannot be detached from the object-matter, because the two together evoke a mental picture.

Symbolic description, if it is allowed within the scope of the term imagery, may be regarded as an extension of this kind of image. Apparently simple description, as in examples quoted earlier, would seem often to be in a sense the subject-matter of an image, in which the object-matter, or the basic idea, and the relationship between the two, is not stated,



but only implied, or suggested, or evoked.

The distinctions between these various kinds of image are rough, and probably they shade off into one another. It is clear however that if the subject-matter alone be regarded as important, many images of thought will be ignored altogether, while in certain cases the object-matter will inevitably enter into the discussion. Moreover, unless the scope of imagery be extended, much that might come under the heading 'subject-matter', as for instance symbolic description, will be ignored. The subject-matter may provide a word-picture; or subject-matter and object-matter together may do so; or there may be no word-picture at all; and often such word-picture as there is is irrelevant to the meaning of the image.

For a psychological study of the workings of the author's mind, or of the sources of his images, it may be that the subject-matter is especially important, as illustrating the author's interests and reading outside the main theme of his work. Other factors, however, have a bearing on this, and on the linkage between object-matter and subject-matter. For instance, the object-matter of one image may appear as the subject-matter of another, and both may also appear as simple reference. Thus in Macbeth the

lines

Macbeth does murder sleep, the innocent sleep,  
Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care,  
II,ii,36-7

contain two images; in the first 'sleep' is the subject-matter, suggesting the enormity of the murder of Duncan, and in the second sleep is the object-matter - the concept 'sleep' is illuminated by the phrase "knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care". Elsewhere in the scene 'sleep' appears in literal usage, "Macbeth shall sleep no more" (II,ii,43). Where this happens the emotional connotations of one image are caught up in another, or transferred in some measure to a word or literal statement. In this way the imaginative quality of the poetic imagery may penetrate a whole work, and even for a psychological study it would be necessary to pay attention to other elements besides the subject-matter of imagery. If such a study be made with the intention of discovering the workings of the author's unconscious mind, then some note has also to be made of the occasions when images are introduced for specific purposes; as, for instance, to give a special literary flavour to a satirical passage by echo or parody of another author's writing, or when, to point a moral, a proverb or common saying is quoted or dressed up in new words.

(v) Further Analysis of the Two Kinds of Image

The last two sections have been devoted to developing and illustrating some of the questions arising from the previous discussion of the nature of the poetic image and the two kinds of image. Reasons have been put forward for extending the meaning of the term 'poetic imagery' to include at least symbolic description, and certain figurative words relating to natural objects which have acquired a wealth of association with time, and have come to have a permanent metaphorical value. In the last section it was noted that although the close inter-dependence of the terms creates the significance of an image, their relationship can be expressed in different ways. In some images the subject-matter exists in its own right, can be detached and discussed separately, as providing a sensuous and evocative word-picture; in others there is either no word-picture, or the word-picture provided is irrelevant to the meaning of the image. The first kind, in which the quality of the image depends upon some appreciation of its sensuousness, includes images of impression, symbolic description and figurative words. The second consists of images of thought.

The image of impression is commonly descriptive

in as much as it provides a word-picture. Its function may be merely to evoke or restore a desired atmosphere in a poem, and a very few lines may suffice for this; or it may carry, through more detailed suggestiveness, a great weight of meaning, and may extend through the length of a long simile, or a whole poem. Whether long or short, the effectiveness of the image seems to depend on contemplation by the reader of the word-picture. This picture as a whole is static, though it may contain considerable movement, just as any painting, though it may be of a battle in action, is still static as a whole. So in Paradise Lost the fallen angels try to relieve their pain and to while away the time while Satan is away visiting the earth, and the tumult is expressed in the simile

As when Aloides from Oealia Crown'd  
With conquest, felt th'envenom'd robe, and tore  
Through pain up by the roots Thessalian Pines,  
And Lichas from the top of Oeta threw  
Into th' Euboic Sea.

11,542-6.

The image presents a picture built of action, but the picture itself is static, and it is out of this whole, not the individual details, that the meaning of the image emerges. Such an image, as observed before, gives indirect imaginative expression to ideas and relationships; the reader needs to contemplate and

make the relationship in his own mind between the word-picture and the idea which it is amplifying or expressing. Where the poet succeeds in guiding the reader's mind to the required relationship, the image he makes is truly evocative, and a good image; where he does not, the image may still be evocative, but suggest the wrong connotations. The image of impression may in any case be pleasant to read even when not understood.

In the image of thought on the other hand, the meaning is usually presented directly within the terms of the image; that is, the terms themselves state the basic ideas of the image directly, and may be abstract words, as in

How all occasions do inform against me  
And spur my dull revenge.

Hamlet IV, iv, 32

Virtue itself scapes not calumnious strokes

Hamlet I, iii, 38

There is no word-picture, or what there is matters little; the image offers direct interaction of human attributes, feelings, ideas, or persons, and the figurative quality of the image lies in the vivid way in which the relationships are made, usually in terms of concrete things, of action, or of the attribution of life. Indeed life and motion seem to be most characteristic of this type of image. The

reader is not asked to contemplate a picture, but rather to be alert to and recognize in a flash the relationship involved, to share in a rapid mental action. In this sense the image of thought is dynamic in contrast to the static image of impression; it does not suggest or evoke, but rather stimulates attention, and gives life to abstract relationships. It is characteristically brief and pungent, requires a quick imaginative leap, whereas the image of impression builds up a picture of imaginative suggestiveness.

This broad division between images of impression and thought suggests further conclusions. The image of impression, being relatively static, capable of much elaboration, and depending often on the slow building up of a suggestive word-picture, would seem to be especially suitable to poetry which is to be read, or narrated, where the space at the command of the poet is limited only by the form he has chosen, and the reader can take his time in reading; perhaps most of all to narrative, epic, elegiac and kindred forms. The image of thought, which is concerned with immediate human relationships of thought or feeling, is perhaps especially suitable for reflective or argumentative verse, for such forms as the sonnet, or the 'metaphysical' poem.

Above all it would seem to be suitable to the poetic drama, where the interplay of human personalities, thoughts and feelings, is presented directly on the stage, and where the majority of speeches of the various characters are short passages of argumentative or reflective verse.

This is not to say that images of impression do not appear in forms of poetry where images of thought are more characteristic; indeed short images of impression and passages of symbolic description occur in reflective poetry and in the drama, while the figurative word, echo and repetition are common devices in the poetic drama especially, as in most verse for speaking. Images of thought likewise occur probably in all forms of poetry. The broad distinctions, however, would seem to remain true, between the image of impression, which is a specifically poetic image in the main, and the image of thought, which may be called a specifically dramatic image. It may be suggested that dramatic poems make use of the former kind of image preponderantly, and poetic dramas, in so far as they are successful as dramas, of the latter. Probably the complete failure as plays of much of the poetic drama written since the

seventeenth century is due largely to the failure of the author to work out his subject in terms of this specifically dramatic imagery.

### Conclusion

This chapter has been devoted to a brief examination of the nature of the poetic image, which though not the sole, is probably the most important imaginative element in poetic drama. An attempt has been made to show that the usual definition of poetic image as metaphor and simile is inadequate even for the study of poetry. A satisfactory definition is perhaps impossible, but a good working definition is wide enough to embrace all the definitions of 'image' noted in the last chapter as having been used. Equally important is the distinction between imagery of thought and imagery of impression, as illustrating that the amplified definition commonly made of the poetic image as a word-picture is also inadequate, since many images of thought can in no sense be said to suggest a mental image. In both these ways additional reasons are brought forward for extending the discussion of imagery in drama beyond the usual terms of reference. In the next chapter the special features of the drama which have a bearing on



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**imagery will be examined in order to arrive at a  
definition of dramatic imagery.**

## CHAPTER 4

### Dramatic Deagery

## DRAMATIC IMAGERY

In the preceding chapters an attempt has been made to provide a basis for formulating a new concept of dramatic imagery.<sup>1</sup> The necessity of enlarging the usual definition of poetic imagery to include symbolic description and words has been indicated, and the way in which these features of the language are involved with effects peculiar to drama has also been suggested. The drama would seem to have special linguistic features as distinct from non-dramatic poetry, in its use of images of thought, and of repetition or echo of word and motif, as well as of stage-effects and action which are beyond the scope of poetry. Dramatic imagery would then include poetic imagery in this wider sense, and certain features peculiar to drama with which the poetic imagery is interconnected. This chapter is concerned to bring together suggestions put forward earlier, and discuss the special features of drama in more detail preparatory to proposing a working

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<sup>1</sup> The term has been used before by G. H. W. Rylands of metaphor used dramatically, and very recently by W. Clemen in a sense approaching the definition given here. Speaking of Hamlet he noted that the poisoning in the final scene and in the dumbshow help to establish disease imagery, that the imagery arises from the reality, and "Thus imagery and action continually play into each other's hands and we see how the term 'dramatic imagery' gains a new significance" (The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery 1951, p.113.)

definition of dramatic imagery. A method of classification and the importance of and linkage between overall and local or primary patterns will also be considered.

### (1) Direct Imagery

A poetic play differs in certain characteristics from a poem, even a dramatic poem, because it is conceived three-dimensionally, as a piece to be acted on a stage, and not as reading matter only. Plays are also reading-matter, so that the borderline between a play and a dramatic poem is not always easily distinguishable. Many English poetic dramas were intended for the stage, but are rarely or never performed, having been found unactable, or proved stage failures; yet some are still widely read as literature for their poetic value. These fail as plays, it may be presumed, because they were not conceived in terms of the stage, because they lack action, or because their language and imagery fail to be dramatic, that is tense, swift and co-ordinated with the action. It is a notable feature of the better Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedies, that the poetic imagery is connected with, and draws part of its power from the various effects and actions which take place on the stage. Language is the sole medium

of poetry; in the drama language and dramatic action are integrated in the final effect, and the action provides a species of 'image' not possible in poetry, the direct image.

In the first place, although little or no scenery was available to an Elizabethan dramatist, he could make use of a wide variety of stage effects, both visual and auditory, which might be of tremendous import in the imaginative effect of a play. An example is the terrible knocking which comes to disturb Macbeth and his wife immediately after the murder of Duncan, and is repeated again and again, to become, in association with poetic imagery of noise, a symbol of Macbeth's fear and recognition of guilt.

Whence is that knocking?  
How is't with me when every noise appals me?  
Macbeth II, ii, 57-8

Wake Duncan with thy knocking! I would thou  
couldst!  
II, ii, 74

Another example, this time of a direct visual image, occurs in Julius Caesar, when the murdered and bleeding body of Caesar lies on the stage for the greater part of Act III, all the conspirators and Mark Antony are smeared in Caesar's blood, and Caesar falls

Even at the base of Pompey's statue  
Which all the while ran blood

Julius Caesar III, 11, 192-3

so that in a sense the blood of Caesar flows out and engulfs Rome, is an omen of the war and greater bloodshed to follow.

Such stage effects are linked with the use of properties - the blood which appears on the conspirators' hands, the dead body, possibly a statue of Pompey. So in Tourneur's The Revenger's Tragedy the skull over which Vindice soliloquises becomes symbolic of corruption, decay, futility, and his longing for revenge; the connotations of this concrete symbol are continually enhanced through the language and imagery connected with it. Again in Othello the whole action revolves round the handkerchief lost by Desdemona, which is symbolic of the triviality of motive on which Othello's jealousy and crime are based. Another obvious instance of the use of a property in this symbolic way occurs in Richard II, where the royalty, authority and troubles which Richard surrenders to Bolingbroke are all embodied in the crown which passes from one to the other. Not all the properties used in Shakespeare's plays have a symbolic quality: in all the instances cited the attention of reader or audience is directed to the

property concerned by the text, and its significance pointed by frequent reference and by association with poetic imagery, but the use of a number of properties, common necessities in most plays, such as tables and chairs, often passes unnoticed. Even these help to provide visual settings, as for instance a banquet scene, which may play a considerable part in creating a play's imaginative background.

Thirdly, powerful direct visual images are sometimes provided by what may be called symbolic action. As in the case of stage effects and properties, stage action may have a vivid sensory appeal, and a figurative or symbolic meaning which is pointed by the dialogue. A notable example in Shakespeare's plays is the sleepwalking of Lady Macbeth; she cannot find rest from the pricks of conscience, is awake even during her sleep, and constantly washing imaginary blood from her hands. Her sleepwalking is a physical image of her fear and guilt, and of the terrible truth that in murdering Duncan Macbeth murdered sleep itself. The blinding of Gloucester in King Lear is action of a similar kind. The loss of his eyes seems a physical punishment for and also parallels his moral blindness in

misjudging his sons, and the whole business is a type of Lear's own blindness in relation to his daughters, and the afflictions he has to bear. In both these instances the action is pointed by poetic imagery and language; action and image work together to produce one effect.

All these devices, symbolic stage effects, the use of properties and action may share the functions performed by poetic imagery in establishing a play's imaginative effect; the poetic imagery amplifies and extends the force and significance of direct images throughout a play. Thus as noted earlier,<sup>1</sup> there are many occasions when what is commonly taken out of its context and spoken of as a poetic image, is a metaphor or simile only by virtue of its relation to direct imagery on the stage, or gains much of its effect through association with direct imagery. Similarly much of the poetic imagery connected with the direct images cited above is intelligible only because we see or visualise the action on the stage. Such famous images as

Out, vile jelly!  
Where is thy lustre now?  
King Lear III.vii,83

<sup>1</sup>

See Chapter II, pp.155-7.



Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this  
Clean from my hand? No this my hand will  
rather

The multitudinous seas incarnadine,  
Making the green one red.

Macbeth II, 11, 60-3

are effective in relation to the blinding of Gloucester, and the sight of Macbeth fresh from murdering Duncan, and with his hands covered in blood. In this way direct images interact with spoken dialogue in building up patterns of imagery, and both should be considered in the examination of dramatic imagery.

#### (11) Poetic Imagery and Iterative Words

As commonly analysed and classified, poetic imagery is limited to those metaphors and similes which can be related to some sensory experience, usually visual or auditory, postulated as having occurred to an author, or to those which evoke a sensory image in the critic's mind. This means that on the one hand symbolic description, which may be regarded as an extreme form of the image of impression, on the other hand, those images of thought which evoke no concrete picture, have frequently been ignored. All within these limits should be included in a discussion of imagery, even though many images do not admit of being classified according to subject-matter.

Iterative words may also be significant in carrying over and extending the associations of images.

The image of thought is common in the plays of Shakespeare's maturity, and in the best work of many other dramatists of the period. Being forceful, direct and brief, the image of thought is the best medium for expressing the tensions between one character and another, and within the single character, which are a feature of tragedy. Such an image often suggests no picture, or only the faint outline of one. In its most characteristic forms it consists either of an unparticularised personification or near-personification, as for instance

All pity choked with custom of fell deeds  
Julius Caesar III, i, 269

or in the attribution of motion or some quality of life to an abstraction or to a dead thing, as in the lines

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day  
Macbeth V, v, 19-20

The idea is primary in these images, not the sensory impression; but by the linkage of themes

and words, and the carrying over of suggestion, they may come to have their part in or form overall patterns, and gain increased power from their associations. Thus in Hamlet's words

Or to take arms against a sea of troubles  
Hamlet III,1,59

there is no realisation of pictorial images, yet "arms" and "sea" link with two of the notable image or idea patterns of Hamlet, and consequently this line gains in force. Such images may also form their own iterative patterns, overlooked often, as in The Revenger's Tragedy, where the repeated metaphorical use of verbs of motion is largely responsible for the sense of speed and energy in the play.

As images of thought provide the imaginative expression of the deepest feelings and thoughts, so images of impression, which appeal primarily through the picture they evoke, or some sort of sensory stimulus, provide an imaginative background and colouring to a play. They thus interact with direct images presented in stage effect and symbolic action, which indeed take the place of much imagery of impression. The violent knocking which disturbs Macbeth after the murder of Duncan is the

culmination of a series of imagined noises; what Macbeth and his wife had been afraid of becomes real in the actual noise; their fear had earlier been present in poetic image and description

earth  
Hear not my steps, which way they walk,  
for fear  
The very stones prate of my whereabouts  
Macbeth II, i, 56-8

Didst thou not hear a noise?  
I heard the owl scream and the crickets cry.  
II, ii, 14-5

In this way poetic image and direct image work together and extend each other's meaning. Whereas the effect of direct imagery, the repeated knocking here, the graveyard scene with its skulls in Hamlet forming an ironic yet terrible culmination to all Hamlet's thought on suicide and death, is concentrated in a scene or a few scenes, the poetic imagery may extend the associations of these scenes throughout the play. Not only may iterative patterns in the poetic imagery carry over these associations, both directly in images of impression and indirectly in images of thought, but they may also multiply linkages, and gather new and increased significance. The noise that brought fear to Macbeth becomes also a mark of the terror he brings to Scotland:

each new morn  
New widows howl, new orphans cry, new  
sorrows  
Strike heaven on the face, that it resounds  
As if it felt with Scotland, and yell'd out  
Like syllable of dolour.

Macbeth IV, iii, 4-8

Iterative words also play their part in carrying over associations, particularly where they are connected with some vivid direct image, and provide a ready means of giving dramatic emphasis to an idea or object. Thus in Timon of Athens the word 'gold' echoes through certain scenes, in Othello the word 'honest', in Macbeth the words 'sleep' and 'blood' occur again and again in a few scenes, giving tremendous emphasis to these things at particular points in the play:

Glamis hath murder'd sleep, and therefore  
Cawdor  
Shall sleep no more; Macbeth shall sleep  
no more.

Macbeth II, ii, 42-3

It will have blood; they say, blood will  
have blood;  
III, iv, 122

These words are connected with direct images, Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking, the blood which appears on the bleeding sergeant, Macbeth's hands and daggers, on Banquo's ghost, and also with poetic images such as the already quoted

this my hand will rather  
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,  
Making the green one red.

Macbeth II,ii,61-3

so that they come to have a symbolic quality. Thus the blood which cannot be washed off comes to represent Macbeth's guilt and fear, and the perpetual stain of his crimes, and his murders inflict the terror of sleeplessness not only on himself but on the whole of Scotland. The mere mention of these words outside the scenes where they are concentrated with such force may be sufficient to carry over the poetic associations which they have gathered. There is, for example, a special poignancy in the hope of those who wish for Macbeth's downfall, so that

                                    we may again  
Give to our tables meat, sleep to our nights  
                                    III,vi,33-4

These lines would usually be ignored in a consideration of the poetic imagery of Macbeth, but they contribute to the imaginative effect, and it is difficult to see how they can be entirely separated from metaphor and simile connected with sleep.

Images of thought may form special patterns

of personification or movement, but also, by echo or association they may carry over and intensify the sensory impact of images of impression. Symbolic description, passages which though not strictly metaphorical, convey a sensory image, or imply a deeper than surface meaning, must be included among images of impression; an instance is the line of Lady Macbeth quoted above, "I heard the owl scream and the crickets cry". The imaginative setting of poetic tragedies, their mood, atmosphere and background, are largely suggested by images of impression in association with direct imagery and iterative words, all of which are usually directly evocative, and images of thought extend this atmosphere and associations into the inmost thoughts and feelings of the characters, and their most intense conflicts, as in Hamlet's soliloquies, or the violent scene between him and his mother. Both kinds of poetic image, symbolic description and iterative words are thus all concerned in dramatic imagery, though their functions and the way they create their effects may be different.

**(iii) Primary and Overall Patterns**

If symbolic stage effects, action, and iterative words be included in dramatic imagery, then overall patterns of linkages between the subject-matter of scattered images are not the only ones which may exist in a play. For direct images together with associated poetic imagery and words make a powerful impact of short duration on reader or audience, and form what may be called primary patterns of imagery. These patterns may be local, only existing for a scene or act, or may be repeated at various points in a play. They arise directly from action or story, and give it immediate imaginative expression, forming a kind of framework to the imagery. Thus in Macbeth a succession of direct visual or auditory images is presented by means of the bloody hands and daggers, the knocking on the gate, the banquet with the ghost of Banquo, the apparitions, the sleep-walking, and so on. Connected with these effects, and with them establishing the play's atmosphere, are primary patterns of poetic images and words, that is, images and iterative stress on blood, sleep and sleeplessness, darkness and evil, and noise. These primary patterns are concentrated at emphatic points, sleep and sleeplessness in the scenes connected with the murder of Duncan, and the



sleepwalking scene, noise again in the scenes relating to Duncan's death, blood at various points, extending from the second scene when the bleeding sergeant enters, to the appearance of Banquo's ghost with "blood-bolter'd" face among the apparitions in Act IV. Of the references to sleep, sleeplessness and kindred ideas in the play eighteen occur in one scene, II,ii, and thirty-one in the whole of Act II; Duncan's death is given a universal and terrible meaning by being identified with the death of sleep. There is a similar iterative stress on blood in the banquet scene, III,iv.

Overall patterns are based on or connected with these primary patterns through the poetic imagery which extends through the play. In Macbeth blood, sleep and noise are stressed not only in primary patterns, but in overall patterns as well, as for instance in images conveying the "reverberation of sound echoing over vast regions" noted by Miss Spurgeon.<sup>1</sup> In this way the poetic imagery may amplify and give new significance to the primary

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Shakespeare's Imagery, p.327.

patterns, and in turn draw part of its own strength from the connection. Not only poetic imagery, but words, simple references, may help to create the overall pattern; for the subject-matter of one image may appear as the object-matter of another, and both may occur as reference. There seems to be no reason for dissociating reference and poetic image on the grounds that the former is consciously made and has no bearing on an author's imaginative vision.<sup>1</sup> For example, Miss Spurgeon included

A mote it is to trouble the mind's eye  
Hamlet I,1,112

among the 'dominant' image group relating to sickness in this play, but omitted the far more powerful 'atmospheric' comment of Francisco in the same scene

'tis bitter cold  
And I am sick at heart.  
I,1,8-9

There are similar passages elsewhere in the play which certainly carry more weight than the light-hearted remark about the mind's eye, as for instance

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p.317.

It warms the very sickness in my heart  
That I shall live and tell him to his teeth,  
Thus didest thou.

IV, vii, 56

thou wouldst not think how ill all's  
here about my heart

V, ii, 223

Image and reference share in expressing the imaginative vision, and if the great poetic images are the supreme expression of it, it is their connection with other image patterns, primary and overall, their ramifications of meaning, linking image, reference and often action, in other words, their basis in the fabric of the play, that give them greatness. Thus overall patterns cannot be limited to the subject-matter of scattered images, at least when there are links with the object-matter of other images, reference, and primary patterns, some note must be taken of all these connections.

This is equally true of overall patterns formed by images of thought. As observed earlier, the sensory appeal of these lies usually in the way the relationship between the terms is made, not in the terms themselves, as in "Macbeth has murder'd sleep". These may form patterns relating to the continuous use of certain motifs, for example verbs of violence, in the relationship, or ideas in the terms of the image, for example sleep. Such patterns do not relate to a pictorial image evoked in the reader's

mind, but to themes or ideas or manners of expression which have an imaginative significance in the play. Again these do not exist in isolation but connect with primary patterns, iterative words, and interfuse with imagery of impression. These patterns have frequently been ignored, as Miss Spurgeon ignored imagery associated with sleep in Macbeth. Primary patterns and overall patterns in all their ramifications thus come within the scope of dramatic imagery, and include much more than the subject-matter of poetic imagery which is usually studied.

#### (iv) Classification

Patterns of dramatic imagery interweave one with another and by linkages in action and words; as has been noted, a poetic image may only exist as metaphor through its relation to a particular action. Indeed it is through our knowledge of their context, dramatic and poetic, that poetic images have their special significance. This interconnection is nowhere seen better than in those intense and highly wrought poetic passages which are often the most memorable in a play. In a succession of flashing images of thought the author may link several image-patterns at one nodal point. Hamlet's second soliloquy provides an obvious example:

to take arms against a sea of troubles  
And by opposing end them - to die, to sleep,  
No more; and by a sleep, to say we end  
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks  
That flesh is heir to.

Hamlet III, 1, 59-63

Within these few lines on the theme of suicide, the emphasis on death which is so common in the play, are connections with war, ever present in the background of the play and frequently appearing in the imagery, the sea, again part of the background of the play - Hamlet and Laertes both take sea voyages during its course - and the prevalent sickness imagery; once again there is a reference to sickness in the heart.

Many more examples of this will be given in the analysis of individual plays in Part II of this dissertation. This suffices to show the inadequacy of classifying poetic images, particularly images of thought, under one head according to the source of the subject-matter. In the first place such classification is confined to one term, or in an image of thought to the expression of relationship. This may be no great fault, as long as it is recognised that the heading is merely a name recalling the idea linking a group of images, and may or may not suggest the mood or indicate the underlying meaning of those images. To speak of 'images of

clothing' tells only a part of what these images are really about; to describe images in this way may be especially suitable if the interest is in the author's mind, but indicates only some of the symbols or ideas through which his imagination works. Secondly this method excludes many images of thought from classification, that is, those which have no detachable or concrete sensory basis, such as "Amazement on thy mother sits" (Hamlet III.iv,112). It excludes also symbolic description, and direct imagery, being confined to poetic imagery in the sense of metaphor and simile. Thirdly, many images derive from multiple sensory sources, so that classification under one head is insufficient; the lines from Hamlet cited above illustrate this. The particular head chosen for an image often depends on the critic's own interest.

Classification in this way has nevertheless proved most convenient, and has been generally adopted. The criticisms of it made here can be reduced to two, that it has been confined to one term of metaphor and simile, and that one head has usually been relied on for each image. The first can be met by including in the classification direct imagery, object-matter as well as subject-

matter of poetic imagery, and all the other factors which together comprise dramatic imagery. Certain new heads not relating to the sensory qualities of the imagery would have to be found to indicate the additional patterns brought within the scope of the classification. The second criticism can be met by including everything relevant under each head, that is by cross-indexing much imagery. In this way the usual method of classifying poetic imagery can be made suitable for classifying dramatic imagery.

These modifications are, however, important. They reduce the emphasis on sensory sources and allow increased attention to dramatic importance. They reduce the possibility of strange interpretations being made, since note is taken of all the aspects of images and their interconnections, instead of only one aspect considered in isolation. Being much more comprehensive, this modified method provides more adequate means for discussing imagery in a play, whether the object be to interpret, offer an appreciation, or find out something about the author's mind. It must be observed that classification is a means, not an end in itself, and reliance on statistics is therefore to be avoided. The mere iteration of a word or idea may not have any special significance, unless the author has embodied in it

something of the imaginative aura or meaning of the play. In such a subjective matter as the discussion of imagery statistics are valuable chiefly for the immediate force they can give to a particular point. It must also be kept in mind that a particular head used to describe an image is only a label indicating one of the attributes of that image, and is not a complete, nor the only way of describing it. With these reservations and modifications the classification suggested transforms a method invented for a particular purpose, to probe an author's mind, into one of general application.

(v.) Other Factors Affecting Dramatic Imagery

The main limits of dramatic imagery have been suggested, the kind of patterns likely to occur, and a suitable method of classification discussed. It remains to note certain other factors which may contribute to the imaginative effect of the dramatic imagery, and need to be examined in connection with it. Iterative stylistic devices are one such factor; and it is notable that many of what we must now call tricks of style owing to the rigid limitations put upon the term 'poetic imagery' would have been included among figures of thought and of



speech by Elizabethan critics.<sup>1</sup> In Macbeth, for instance, the feeling of uncertainty and confusion which pervades much of the play is partially created by the insistent questioning which begins with the very first line and extends through almost every scene. This plays its part together with poetic imagery in establishing the atmosphere of the play. Another example is the cumulative effect of hendiadys in Hamlet, the use of two words of much the same sense to express a single idea, as in the line "a fashion and a toy in blood" (I,iii,6), which is again a device common in the play, and contributes to the deliberative, hesitant atmosphere of much of it. The Latinised vocabulary so marked in Troilus and Cressida is another device of this kind, helping to suggest the pompous emptiness of so many of the speeches in council, and the general futility so marked

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<sup>1</sup> of. Sister Miriam Joseph's Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language, and the catalogues of figures given e.g. in Thomas Wilson's The Arte of Rhetorique (1560) or George Puttenham's The Arte of English Poesie (1569).

throughout.<sup>1</sup> All these contribute in some measure to the imaginative atmosphere of the plays, and play their part as a groundwork, if nothing more, to the dramatic imagery.

Historical and geographical placing and the use of proper names also have a bearing on dramatic imagery; such things may indeed be often classed as symbolic description. They are, however, frequently ignored, except in the case of Othello, where the many references to remote places and people, the Propontic, the Hellespont, Egypt, the Anthropophagi, Aleppo, and to Othello's ancient lineage, have such an obvious function in surrounding the hero of the play with an aura of grandeur and exotic mystery. In any poetic drama references to the external world have some imaginative power in establishing the events of a personal tragedy or story in a context of real life, thus building up a play's background; in this as in all things reference and poetic

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<sup>1</sup> The use of hendiadys in Hamlet and of a Latinized vocabulary in Troilus and Cressida was examined by G. H. W. Rylands in Words and Poetry, pp. 179ff and 190ff, but he saw these uses as part of a general stylistic development, and was not concerned with their particular dramatic functions in these plays.

image interact. Setting the action of a play against the background of an apparently real world or nation, and linking it with events in that world paradoxically universalises the action through this localisation of a special kind, and gives it greater magnitude. The terrible deeds of which one man, e.g. Macbeth, is capable may thus be contrasted with the humdrum nature of life in general. The tragic hero can be isolated only in the context of a world or nation, and not in a geographical vacuum. Thus place-names and other references to peoples and localities may help to establish the setting and background, have a specific dramatic function in helping to universalize the action, and also may have an evocative quality in themselves, especially when foreign or remote. Thus the action of Macbeth in a sense embraces Norway, Ireland, distant London, as well as Scotland, and that of Hamlet England, France, Germany, as well as Denmark.

A feature of some plays which is related to this kind of localisation is the introduction of a generalised or symbolic character, one who often has no individuality and no name, who stands apart from the action of the play, and surveys it as an onlooker, conscious of strange happenings but not

involved in them, as a commentator, or sometimes provides by his ignorance of the true meaning of the action, a deeply ironic contrast. Such are the Old Man who has never known such terrible happenings as on the night of Duncan's death in all the seventy years he can remember; Edgar in his role as Tom o'Bedlam, the mad Beggar in King Lear, and the Gravediggers in Hamlet. These characters form part of the imaginative background, and enlarge the significance of the particular action of the play by relating it to life and events outside. All these factors, stylistic devices, historical and geographical placing, generalised characters, may have connections with dramatic imagery, and if so, should receive some attention.

#### (vi.) Summary and Conclusion

In the first two chapters an attempt was made, by surveying the work of writers on the poetic drama, and the principles upon which their criticism has been based, to show how rigidly the term 'poetic imagery' had come to be interpreted by most critics of the drama. At the same time the term was shown to have had a variety of meanings in various contexts. The fact was stressed that the manifold

functions claimed for poetic imagery in drama were shared by many other factors, so that a separate category of dramatic as distinct from poetic imagery was called for. In Chapter III a more detailed analysis of poetic imagery was made, which suggested that even in poetry an extension of the usual rigid definition to include symbolic description, that is, to include most of the variety of meanings with which the term had been used at one time or another, was well warranted. It was further found possible to make a general division between two kinds of poetic image, the image of impression and the image of thought, the latter being especially characteristic of dramatic poetry, the former more common in non-dramatic poetry. In the present chapter the nature of dramatic imagery has been indicated, having regard to the features which distinguish drama from poetry.

Most writers on imagery in drama, following Miss Spurgeon, have concentrated their attention on metaphor and simile, and particularly on one term, the subject-matter; and where they have extended these limits, they have done so arbitrarily, without stating the nature of the

extension, or reasons for making it. This has brought into use a classification according to subject-matter based originally on an interest in the author's mind and ideas. Images have been considered apart from context, and in overall patterns related by subject-matter, patterns orientated towards areas of interest in the author's mind rather than to their function and effect in a play. This, it has been suggested, is an inadequate conception of imagery, since it involves regarding a play as a poem, and is restricted to a narrow view of the one term considered. The differences between poetry and drama, and between the functions of imagery in them, have been noted as illustrating this inadequacy. Moreover, images of thought, which are common in the drama, often have no sensory appeal, or what they have is frequently irrelevant to the understanding of the image, so that these seem to demand a wider approach.

Thus it was necessary to develop a concept of dramatic imagery, which would admit of a wider definition of the poetic image, include the specifically dramatic or direct image, and would not be subject to a classification so rigid as to exclude on the one hand symbolic description, on the other a large number of images of thought; in other

words a concept derived from drama, not poetry. In this chapter the scope of dramatic imagery has been tentatively defined as embracing direct imagery in stage effect, action and property, poetic imagery, including both subject-matter and object-matter, symbolic description, and iterative words wherever these have some imaginative power. Various other devices may also have to be examined in a discussion of dramatic imagery, if they are connected with, or help to perform the functions of groups of images. Dramatic imagery necessitates a much more flexible system of classification than is customary, so that object-matter, words, direct images, can be brought into it, and so that images can, where necessary, be classified under several heads, not merely under one. Furthermore, primary patterns of direct image, word and poetic image, are as much a part of dramatic imagery as the overall patterns, hitherto studied; indeed, overall patterns are usually based on, or grow out of primary patterns.

In the following chapters a study will be made of the dramatic imagery in five poetic plays. It will be obvious how much is owed to those writers

on imagery whose work has been severely criticised in the preceding pages. This criticism has not been made in order to belittle the immense value of much of their work, but only to clarify the issues at stake. It is due to them that the word 'imagery' has become so important in the discussion of poetic drama. They had the hardest task, to begin the exploration; it is easier to modify than to pioneer.



## **PART 2**

## Prefatory Note

In the next three chapters an examination is made of the dramatic imagery of three plays by Shakespeare. Macbeth has been chosen because its poetic imagery has been discussed at length by several critics including Caroline Spurgeon, Cleanth Brooks and Roy Walker.<sup>1</sup> The fresh examination which follows gathers together much of what has been said, but may indicate also whether the wider implications of dramatic imagery afford a more balanced picture or throw fresh light on the play. Hamlet has received less attention, and the chief emphasis has been laid on imagery of sickness or corruption.<sup>2</sup> A study of its dramatic imagery suggests that other groups of images are equally important, especially those relating to the stateliness of the court, and the play is particularly interesting in relation to Julius Caesar, for both plays show a deliberate use of formal oratory for dramatic effect.

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1 C. F. E. Spurgeon, Shakespeare's Imagery, p.324ff., where she finds clothing imagery to be dominant, and see above, pp.37-8, 49-50, 146. For the views of Brooks and Walker, see above, pp.80-1, 72-3.

2 Shakespeare's Imagery, pp.316-20, 367-71, and see above pp.38, and note, 133, 146. W. Clemen, The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery, pp.106-18, has a much more balanced analysis than that of Miss Spurgeon, and the poetic imagery is related to action; Clemen finds that corruption becomes "the leitmotif of the imagery" (p.113) and that Hamlet never generalises but speaks always "in a language which bears the stamp of a unique and personal experience" (P.112). See also above, p.199n.

On this account, or possibly because the subject-matter of its poetic imagery proved unrewarding, Julius Caesar has been rather neglected as a play considered to be lacking in imagery, and to be "comparatively cold, colourless and formal".<sup>1</sup> For this reason an analysis of its dramatic imagery may prove especially valuable.

The final chapters contain much briefer analyses of the dramatic imagery of Tourneur's The Revenger's Tragedy<sup>2</sup> and Middleton's Women Beware Women. These plays provide at once contrasts to and parallels with those of Shakespeare. They show how much more complex and wider in scope Shakespeare's use of dramatic imagery was, and at the same time serve to indicate how common in the literature of the age were some of the image patterns which have been said to illustrate the personality of Shakespeare.

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<sup>1</sup> F. E. Halliday, Shakespeare and his Critics, p.137. He said of the style of Hamlet, "It is a leisurely method, and just a little clumsy" (p.127). Marion Smith found only 65 poetic images in Julius Caesar, which seemed very bare to her, especially the last two acts which she thought must be by an author other than Shakespeare (Marlowe's Imagery, pp.189-91). Miss Spurgeon counted 83 images in Julius Caesar, a play which she called "almost bare in style" (Shakespeare's Imagery, p.346).

<sup>2</sup> The section on The Revenger's Tragedy is based on a fuller study in an unpublished dissertation, The Revenger's Tragedy and The Atheist's Tragedy: Some Notes on their Style and on the Authorship Problem, presented at Birmingham University in 1949.

## CHAPTER 5

### The Dramatic Imagery of 'Macbeth'

THE DRAMATIC IMAGERY OF MACBETH

The intensity and wealth of metaphor in Macbeth have often been noticed, and the poetic imagery of the play has attracted much attention.<sup>1</sup> Intensity is not, however, a quality of this imagery in isolation; it is due to the close-knit relationships between poetic imagery and stage action. Nearly all the groups of poetic images observed by Miss Spurgeon and others stem from or figure in primary groups of direct images presented visually or audibly on the stage, or patterns of iterative words; in some cases they are also connected with marked stylistic peculiarities. Many of the dramatic patterns formed by primary, or direct, images and their complementary secondary, or poetic, images, interweave; in the most powerful poetic images in the play several of these dramatic image patterns are brought into contact and often closely linked. Indeed there are few images in Macbeth, poetic or direct, which, as it were, hang loose, and do not echo through the play gathering added meaning and depth. The speed and unity of the play are doubtless largely due to this extraordinary

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<sup>1</sup> See especially Caroline Spurgeon, Shakespeare's Imagery, pp.324-335; Roy Walker, The Time is Free.

integration of image and action. Secondary groups of poetic images derive their immediate force from primary effects, and in their turn develop, intensify and link together the various emotions, symbolisms and meanings expressed in the primary effects. The interaction of these two factors which together comprise dramatic imagery is at best clumsily expressed, and is probably more reciprocal than this. It is worth considering, for instance, how far the accumulated symbolism and imagery attached to sleep helps to produce the overwhelming effect of the sleep-walking scene. Thus it is appropriate to examine direct and poetic imagery together, as under the headings below. In view of the integration of the various patterns of dramatic imagery, detachment of one from another is to some extent arbitrary. However, it is most convenient to discuss these patterns separately, and the linkage between them will be apparent even when they are considered in this way.

### (1) Confusion

Perhaps the most notable feature of Macbeth is the atmosphere of confusion, a confusion of values and natural order. This is expressed largely through

primary groups of images or stylistic devices, but it is also an aspect, though not the most obvious one, of much of the play's poetic imagery. Confusion is part and parcel of the play from the start with the strange appearance of the Witches; the opening scenes are concerned with a rebellion in Scotland, and confusion is shown as present in the mind of Macbeth, and after the murder of Duncan, in the state of Scotland, the 'world' of the play. Things are not what they seem

you should be women,  
And yet your beards forbid me to interpret  
That you are so. I, 111, 45-7

or reality itself is almost incredible

So should he look  
That seems to speak things strange  
I.11.46-7

Say from whence  
You owe this strange intelligence?  
I.iii.75-6

Nothing afear'd of what thyself didst make,  
Strange images of death. I, 111, 96-7

But 'tis strange  
I, 111, 122.

'Strange' is indeed something of a keyword in the first act. The confusion in Macbeth's mind is apparent in his dealings with the Witches, in his vision of the dagger, and in the appearance to

him alone of Banquo's ghost. The confusion which his crimes bring to Scotland and to the whole of nature is also imaged directly. In II, iv an old man, any old man, relates the reversal of order in nature to the comparative calm of his long past:

Threescore and ten I can remember well;  
Within the volume of which time I have seen  
Hours dreadful and things strange; but  
                                this sore night  
Hath trifled former knowings.

II, IV, 1-4.

In the next act is the banquet scene, which begins with the presentation of the nobility of Scotland with due order and formality "You know your own degrees; sit down" (III, iv, 1), and ends in disorder:

Stand not upon the order of your going,  
But go at once. III, iv, 119-20.

This reversal of natural order is imaged also in the sleep-walking scene, echoing an earlier scene where Lady Macbeth watched through the night, which should be a time of peace and sleep, and in one sense at least, by the sudden appearance of Birnam Wood marching against Macbeth. The unnatural deeds of Macbeth find unnatural punishment; it is Macduff, unnaturally born, who alone can kill him. The result of Macbeth's crimes is thus



imaged in a confusion of values on several planes,  
the political, the natural and the mental. As  
the Doctor attendant on Lady Macbeth says,

unnatural deeds  
Do breed unnatural troubles  
V,1,79-80

Scotland becomes a place where no-one is certain  
of any truth, or is sure of what he knows, not even  
of himself; in Ross's words

But cruel are the times when we are traitors  
And do not know ourselves, when we hold  
rumour  
From what we fear, yet know not what we fear,  
But float upon a wild and violent sea  
Each way and move.  
IV,1,18-22

The continuance of this sense of confusion  
throughout the play is due further to two iterative  
devices. One is the extraordinary amount of  
questioning: there are well over 200 direct  
questions, spread fairly evenly, though most  
prominent in the first two acts. These help to  
create an atmosphere of doubt and restlessness, a  
sense of urgency and confusion, where nothing is  
certain, and everything has to be carefully examined.  
The first four scenes begin abruptly with questions

When shall we three meet again ...?  
I,1,1

What bloody man is that? I,11,1

Where hast thou been, sister? I,111,1

Is execution done on Cawdor? Are not  
Those in commission yet return'd?  
I, iv, 1-2

The dialogue seems to start in the middle; there is no time for preliminaries, and the characters come bluntly to the point. Similar openings occur in later scenes,

How goes the night, boy? II, i, 1  
Is Banquo gone from court? III, ii, 1  
But who did bid thee join with us?  
III, iii, 1

What had he done, to make him fly the land?  
IV, ii, 1

but indeed this insistent questioning is present throughout the play.

The second iterative device which helps to maintain this atmosphere of doubt, and confusion of values, is the combination of opposites in the same phrase. It is not merely that reality and appearance are difficult to distinguish:

are ye fantastical, or that indeed  
Which outwardly ye show? I, iii, 53-4

There's no art  
To find the mind's construction in the face  
I, iv, 11-12

or that reality has to be concealed behind a false appearance, as Macbeth conceals his guilt, and the Scottish nobles their feelings:

mock the time with fairest show;  
False face must hide what the false heart  
doth know.  
I,vii,81-2

look like the innocent flower,  
But be the serpent under't. I,v,66-7

It seems that reality itself palter's "with us in a double sense" (V,viii,20). There is a unity of opposites in the nature of things, an ambiguity whereby the same thing may be both "foul and fair" (I,i,10; I,iii,38) and the same battle must be both lost and won (I,i,4; I,ii,67). These particular combinations of opposites have often been noticed, but there are many other such combinations in the play, more particularly in the first part.

So from that spring whence comfort seem'd  
to come  
Discomfort swells. I,ii,27

This supernatural soliciting  
Cannot be ill, cannot be good:  
I,iii,130-1

nothing is  
But what is not. I,iii,141-2

wouldst not play false,  
And yet wouldst wrongly win I,v,22-3

They have made themselves, and that their  
fitness now  
Does unmake you. I,vii,53-4

To know my deed, 'twere best not know myself.  
II,ii,73

Who can be wise, amaz'd, temperate and furious  
Loyal and neutral, in a moment?  
II,iii,114-5

That would make good of bad, and friends  
of foes  
II,iv,41

Father'd he is, and yet he's fatherless.  
IV,ii,27

Such welcome and unwelcome things at once  
'Tis hard to reconcile. IV,iii,138-9.

These frequent oppositions relate in the first part of the play especially to the confusion in Macbeth's mind, later on to the confusion brought to Scotland through his murders. Malcolm characterises himself as a thorough villain, the opposite of what he really is (IV,iii); Macduff is at one and the same time a hero and a traitor - hero to his countrymen, traitor not only to Macbeth, but to his wife and family (IV,ii). It is part of Macbeth's tragedy that he does not recognise the ambiguity of what the Witches tell him until Birnam Wood actually does move against him. Then he says

I pull in resolution, and begin  
To doubt the equivocation of the fiend  
That lies like truth. V,v,42-3

This background of confused or opposed values is parodied in the Porter's speeches, and gives them their tremendous force. It is appropriate that as porter of hell-gate he should be expert in equivocation, and his playing with words is bitterly ironic:

Lechery, sir, it provokes and unprovokes;  
... therefore, much drink may be said to  
be an equivocator with lechery; it makes  
him, and it mars him; it sets him on, and  
it takes him off; it persuades him, and  
disheartens him; makes him stand to, and  
not stand to ... II,iii,32-8

### (11) Blood and Cleansing

The confusion Macbeth brings to himself and to Scotland is imaged in these oppositions: actions become no longer simply good or bad, but may be welcome and unwelcome, loyal and traitorous at the same time. A duality is present also in other image patterns, as in images of blood and cleansing. As often observed, there is a stress on blood as a physical reality. The second scene opens with the appearance of a bleeding soldier who comes to describe a battle of "bloody execution" (I,ii,18). The "air-drawn" dagger which appears to Macbeth has

on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood  
II,i,46.

After the murder Macbeth returns from Duncan's bed-chamber with blood on his hands (II,ii), which is transferred also to the hands of Lady Macbeth when she goes to smear "the sleepy grooms with blood" (II,ii,50). Later on in the banquet scene the First Murderer enters with Banquo's blood on his

face to inform Macbeth of his success (III,iv,12). A short while afterwards Macbeth turns to his seat to find Banquo's ghost there; his first words are significant

Macbeth: Which of you have done this?

All:

What, my good  
lord?

Macbeth: Thou canst not say I did it: never shake  
Thy gory looks at me. III,iv,49-51.

Presumably the ghost too has blood on his face.

This emphasis on blood is summed up by Macbeth at the end of the scene

It will have blood; they say, blood will  
have blood  
III,iv,122.

Again in IV,1 the "blood-bolter'd Banquo" appears to Macbeth in the show of kings, presumably looking exactly the same as when he took Macbeth's place at the banquet; only now Macbeth is so deep in blood that the ghost only grieves his heart with the prospect of the future, does not startle and horrify him. The second apparition is likewise gory - a bloody child; and the Witches' charm has among its ingredients "baboon's blood" and "sow's blood" (IV,1,37, 64). Finally there is the wonderful realisation of blood in the sleep-walking scene,

where Lady Macbeth appears like yet another apparition, convinced that

Here's the smell of the blood still  
V.1,56

lingering from the murder of Duncan.

At these five points in the play, the second scene with its bleeding messenger, the scenes connected with the murder of Duncan, especially II,11, the banquet scene, III,iv, where appear the murderer with blood on his face and Banquo's ghost, Macbeth's last interview with the Witches (IV,1), when a bloody child and Banquo's ghost are seen, and in the sleep-walking scene (V,1), there is a visual emphasis on blood, which is present on the stage, or in the last instance, imagined to be present. The word 'blood' occurs again and again in the play also, apart from its actual or imagined presence in at least one scene of each act.

It is significant that in what are probably the most dramatically vivid of these scenes, the meeting of Macbeth and his wife after Duncan's murder (II,11) and the sleep-walking scene (V,1), blood is connected visually with cleansing, or rather washing. Lady Macbeth's action "to seem thus washing her hands" (V,1,31ff.) recalls her

remark after Duncan's death,

A little water clears us of this deed.  
II, ii, 67

This connection between blood and washing by water, which is pointed so strongly in these two scenes persists through the play in its poetic imagery; and because of this connection blood does not represent merely the horror of the time, but by its interaction with a cleansing theme, becomes of much more complex significance as the stain of evil, which cannot be washed out, and the badge of a guilty conscience. The poetic imagery connected with blood or water has more significance and power in relation to these primary patterns. This connection is obvious in Macbeth's most famous image

Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood  
Clean from my hand? II, ii, 60-1

when his hands are actually stained with blood; and makes so poignant Lady Macbeth's

all the perfumes of Arabia will not  
sweeten this little hand V, i, 57-8

but is there also, however subdued, in many other images. Macbeth and Banquo had fought against the rebels as though

... they meant to bathe in reeking wounds  
I, ii, 39

and there is irony in Macbeth's words to Donalbain



after Duncan's death:

The spring, the head, the fountain of  
your blood  
Is stopp'd; the very source of it is stopp'd.  
II,iii,103-4

The connection is there again in Macbeth's  
identification of blood with water

I am in blood  
Stopp'd in so far, that, should I wade  
no more,  
Returning were as tedious as go o'er  
III,iv,136-8

in the tears-blood relation in

our country ...  
It weeps, it bleeds; and each new day a  
gash  
Is added to her wounds. IV,iii,39-41

and has further ramifications in for instance

these two images:

And with him pour we in our country's purge  
Each drop of us.

Lennox:

Or so much as it needs,  
To dew the sovereign flower and drown the  
weeds.

Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous  
stuff  
Which weighs upon the heart? V,iii,44.

The "perilous stuff" would indeed seem to be the  
blood of murdered men. The connection is present  
in other images, and even where not present, is so  
strong in the play as a whole that it may perhaps  
add to the power of such lines as

So from that spring whence comfort seem'd  
to come  
Discomfort swells  
I, 11, 27-8

Unsafe the while, that we  
Must lave our honours in these flattering  
streams  
III, 11, 32-3

Duncan is also a spring from which discomfort swells  
for his sons (II, 111, 96); and Macbeth has to stoop  
to deception only because he has laved his honour  
in blood.

Also connected with blood imagery are the  
constant echoes of death in the play; indeed the  
terror Macbeth brings to Scotland is summed up in  
the two images

our country sinks beneath the yoke;  
It weeps, it bleeds; and each new day a gash  
Is added to her wounds  
IV, 111, 39-41

Alas, poor country!  
Almost afraid to know itself. It cannot  
Be call'd our mother, but our grave.  
IV, 111, 164-6.

Death is imaged in blood; the physical stain of  
blood is also the stain of guilt for murder, which  
cannot be washed off. Macbeth's realisation of  
this is expressed in the words of Angus:

Now does he feel  
His secret murders sticking on his hands.  
V, 11, 16-17

(111) Heaven and Hell, Light and Darkness

Another duality ever present in the play is the opposition between heaven and hell, good and evil, frequently symbolised in the contrast of light and darkness. These terms are used in a general sense: the specific theological problems in the play, and the nature of the Witches have been discussed at length by more than one critic.<sup>1</sup> In terms of direct imagery the Witches are indeed "instruments of darkness" (I,iii,124), representatives of hell, "secret, black and midnight hags", (IV,1,46). Banquo recognises their nature at once, "What can the devil speak true?" (I,iii,107); Macbeth only at the end of the play, "be these juggling fiends no more believed" (V,viii,19). The immediate image of evil given by their presence on the stage is intensified by two other direct images, the ghost of Banquo, and the identification of Macbeth's castle with hell by the Porter. This sense of evil is also presented through the language as darkness, in the gloom which surrounds the murder of Duncan and the death of Banquo; it is also in the night that Lady Macbeth is haunted by her own evil. At Duncan's death even

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of. especially W. C. Curry, Shakespeare's Philosophical Patterns, Baton Rouge, 1937.



Not in the legions  
Of horrid hell can come a devil more damn'd  
In evils to top Macbeth. IV,iii,55-7.

The contrast is perhaps particularly marked at two points, one the death of Duncan, when the sleepers cry "God bless us" and "Amen", words which Macbeth is incapable of repeating. This scene, where Macbeth "had most need of blessing" (II,ii,32), is followed by the porter-scene, where the entrance to Macbeth's castle becomes in imagination the entrance to hell. The other is the meeting of Malcolm and Macduff (IV,iii), where there is an insistent contrast between Macbeth as 'devil', 'devilish', 'hell-kite', and Malcolm and Duncan

Thy royal father  
Was a most sainted king: the queen that  
Oftener upon her knees than on her feet,  
Died every day she lived. IV,iii,108-11

The description of curing the king's evil in this scene (IV,iii,140-160) is thus more than a compliment to King James; it is set in the context of a scene more heavily charged with echoes of heaven and hell than any other in Macbeth, and there is an obvious analogy between curing the king's evil and the work Malcolm has to do. Throughout the scene Scotland is spoken of as sick or wounded.

This tyrant, whose sole name blisters our  
tongues  
IV,iii,12

our country sinks beneath the yoke;  
It weeps, it bleeds; and each new day a gash  
Is added to her wounds. IV,iii,39-41

When shalt thou see thy wholesome days again..  
IV,iii,105

good men's lives  
Expire before the flowers in their cups,  
Dying or ere they sicken. IV,iii,171-3

Let's make us medicines of our great revenge,  
To cure this deadly grief. IV,iii,214-5.

Another aspect of this heaven-hell opposition is the element of superstition, witchcraft and folklore in the play. Again the Witches, ghost and apparitions provide direct images, but other features of the play have considerable importance. One is the many references to animals, birds and insects with special associations, the raven, the bat, the black-beetle, the crow, the owl, the kite, the rook, the vulture, snakes, serpents, the rat, the wolf, the scorpion are all creatures of darkness, evil or ill-omen, all have something of the quality of "night's black agents" (III,ii,53). It is largely from ingredients derived from such unpleasant creatures that the Witches make up their charm in IV,i. These creatures are linked with or embody the evil and magic of the Witches and the cruelty of Macbeth, perhaps making these all the

more powerful through age-old associations in folk-lore or superstition. The raven for instance has always been a bird of ill-omen;

The raven himself is hoarse  
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan  
Under my battlements. II,v,39-41.

A powerful contrast is made at two points in the play by the linkage of birds or animals of a very different nature with Macbeth's victims. While Lady Macbeth hears the raven, the innocent Banquo notices in the same battlements that

This guest of summer,  
The temple-haunting martlet, does approve,  
By his loved mansionry, that the heaven's  
breath  
Smells wooingly here. I,vi,3-6.

The association of the martlet with 'temple' and 'heaven's breath' is significant. Much later in Act IV the contrast is even more pointed when Macduff's son is murdered:

the poor wren,  
The most diminutive of birds, will fight,  
Her young ones in her nest, against the owl.  
IV,11,9-11.

Lady Macduff's son is called "poor bird", "poor monkey", "you egg" (IV,11,32-6, 59, 82), and to Macduff and Ross the dead children are "murder'd deer" (IV,111,206). After all this nothing could be more poignant and expressive than Macduff's

Did you say all? O hell-kite! All?  
What, all my pretty chickens and their dam  
At one fell swoop? IV, i, i, 217-9.

Another thread of direct imagery of superstition is provided by the recurrence of magic numbers, especially three. The Witches are three in number; and the figure recurs in their conversation and charms:

When shall we three meet again ...?  
I, i, i

Thrice to thine and thrice to mine  
And thrice again to make up nine.  
Peace! the charm's wound up. I, i, i, 35-7

Thrice the brinded cat hath mew'd  
Thrice and once the hedge-pig whined.  
IV, i, i, 1-2

The Witches produce three apparitions, and a show of eight kings and Banquo, or nine figures, for Macbeth (IV, i). Macbeth's consultation with two murderers in III, i parallels the meeting of the three Witches earlier: just as they appear to be

women  
And yet your beards forbid me to interpret  
That you are so. I, i, i, 45-7

so the murderers appear to be men, yet their true nature is doubtful

Ay, in the catalogue ye go for men;  
As hounds and greyhounds, mongrels, spaniels,  
ours,  
Shoughs, water-rugs and demi-wolves, are clept  
All by the name of dogs. III, i, 92-5.



Macbeth and these two murderers form a parallel group of three. It is notable too that the three apparitions produced by the Witches at Macbeth's demand in IV,1 are balanced by the three blood-stained disturbers of the banquet scene. Banquo's murderer is the first to enter, with blood upon his face (III,iv,12), and a little later Banquo's ghost, also covered in blood twice appears to Macbeth. Both these and the Witches' apparitions appear to Macbeth alone. Perhaps this parallel grouping goes a long way to explain why there should be a third murderer, whose identity has<sup>1</sup> occasioned much speculation, at Banquo's death; three is a significant number.

Finally, there is a strong incantatory element in the play, provided partly by the charm-making and rhythmic movement of the Witches, but mainly by their frequent repetition of words or phrases often, significantly enough, three-fold repetition. Repetition is perhaps natural to the Witches, and there is much in the scenes in which they appear, not only

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<sup>1</sup> Much of this speculation is summarised and a further suggestion made as to the identification of the third murderer with Macbeth himself in Roy Walker's The Time is Free, 105-8.

in their greeting

All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee, thane of  
Glamis!  
All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee, thane of  
Cawdor!  
All hail, Macbeth! thou shalt be king  
hereafter!  
I,iii,48-50

echoed in their "Hail! Hail! Hail!" to Banquo<sup>1</sup>  
(I,iii,62-4) and in the apparition scene, where the  
first and second apparitions greet Macbeth with the  
threefold repetition of his name, and the third  
appears on the Witches cry:

1st Witch: Show!

2nd Witch: Show!

3rd Witch: Show!

All: Show his eyes, and grieve his heart  
IV,i,107-10.

Such repetition is frequent in the Witches' dialogue:

And munch'd, and munch'd, and munch'd  
I,iii,6

I'll do, I'll do, and I'll do  
I,iii,10

Show me, show me  
I,iii,27

A drum, a drum!  
Macbeth doth come.  
I,iii,30-1

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<sup>1</sup> It is perhaps worth noting that this threefold "All hail", the Witches' initial greeting to Macbeth, is paralleled by the repeated "Hail, King ... Hail, King of Scotland! Hail King of Scotland" (V,viii,54-9), the greeting given to Malcolm when Macbeth is finally overcome.

Repetition is a feature also of the play as a whole, although most marked in the Witches' scenes; particularly notable is the iteration of the knocking, the word 'sleep' in II,ii and II,iii, and the repeated 'blood' in III,iv. The echoing of a phrase or word is frequent, sometimes immediate as in

Macbeth:

If we should fail?

lady M.:

We fail!

But screw your courage to the sticking place,  
And we'll not fail. I,vii,59-61

Tomorrow, and to-morrow and to-morrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day  
V,v,19-20;

sometimes spread out through a scene or passage, as for instance the Porter's repeated 'equivocate' in II,iv, or the echoing 'traitor' of IV,ii (the word occurs seven times in this scene of eighty-five lines). This echoing of phrases in so short and compact a play not only increases horror and suspense by virtue of its dramatic use, as in the knocking in Act II, but adds also to the eeriness of atmosphere and element of superstition, through its incantatory effect. Something of this is perhaps contributed even where a repetitive effect has an immediate dramatic function, as when Macbeth visualises a dagger in II,ii, and the iterated "dagger which I see ... I see thee still ... I see thee yet ... I see thee still"

(II,1,33-45) maintains for an audience the essential fact that a dagger is present to him.

(iv) Sleep and Wakefulness

There is a marked emphasis on sleep at two points in the play. One is the scene of the murder of Duncan, II,11, where the word 'sleep' occurs thirteen times in seventy-three lines. It is at a time when men are asleep that Duncan is murdered in his bed, and the deed appears to Macbeth as the murdering of sleep itself:

Wethought I heard a voice cry 'Sleep no more'.  
Macbeth does murder sleep, the innocent sleep,  
Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of  
care,

II,11,35-7

Glamis hath murder'd sleep, and therefore  
Cawdor  
Shall sleep no more; Macbeth shall sleep no  
more.

II,11,42-3.

It is indeed the end of sleep for Macbeth and his wife, as is seen in the scene of sleep-walking (V,1), the second point in the play where sleep and sleeplessness are given a strong dramatic emphasis; Macbeth's deed in killing sleep, the punishment for his and her crimes, is given direct portrayal on the stage. This scene is, however, the consummation of the punishment; already after the murder of Duncan they feel it:

let the frame of things disjoint, both the  
worlds suffer,  
Ere we will eat our meal in fear and sleep  
In the affliction of these terrible dreams  
That shake us nightly: better be with the dead  
Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace,  
Than on the torture of the mind to lie  
In restless ecstasy. Duncan is in his grave;  
After life's fitful fever he sleeps well.

You lack the season of all natures, sleep.  
III, iv, 141.

In a way too this is linked with the Witches; their punishment for a wife's lack of charity is that for her husband

Sleep shall neither night nor day  
Hang upon his pent-house lid I.111.19-20.

Sleep has a larger significance also. Once the court is aroused after Duncan's death

Awake! awake! ...  
Shake off this downy sleep, death's counterfeit.  
II.111.78-81

there is no more sleep for all until Macbeth meets  
his end, for sleeplessness is brought to all Scotland  
by Macbeth's reign of terror. Macduff's mission in  
England is

To wake Northumberland and Warlike Siward:  
That, by the help of these - with Him above  
To ratify the work - we may again  
Give to our tables meat, sleep to our nights,  
Free from our feasts and banquets bloody knives  
III, vi, 31-5.

Sleep and sleeplessness appear in the play as simple references, as both object-matter and subject-matter of

poetic images, and directly imaged in action, and take on a wide significance, symbolising the one, peace of mind and peace in the state, the other the guilty conscience and in some sense the punishment of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, and the terror they bring to Scotland.

It will be noted that in two of the passages quoted sleep is connected with eating as another activity symbolising the quiet mind and peace in the land. This also is directly imaged in the banquet scene, III, iv, where not only is Macbeth unable to eat, but his guests also suffer, and the gathering breaks up in disorder. As soon as Macbeth turns to the table to reply to Lady Macbeth's complaint

You do not give the cheer; the feast is sold  
That is not often vouch'd, while 'tis a making.  
'Tis given with welcome; to feed were best at  
dinner;

From thence, the sauce to meat is ceremony.  
III, iv, 33-6

the ghost of Banquo enters, and disturbs not only Macbeth but his guests whose attention is held by his strange behaviour. Lady Macbeth calls to them

Feed, and regard him not. III, iv, 58.

There are many other references to or images of food in the play, which are strengthened by the many references to birds of prey. The terror and disorder which Macbeth brings to Scotland appear not only as

the inability to eat, but as unnatural, or beastly forms of eating. Of Duncan's horses

'Tis said they eat each other II,iv,18

while the "gruel" or "hell-broth" made by the Witches is composed of such ingredients as

sow's blood, that hath eaten  
Her nine farrow IV,i,64.

Macduff is sure of the goodness of Malcolm

there cannot be  
That vulture in you, to devour so many  
IV,iii,73-4.

The suggestions of preying or of cannibalism in these images portray the orgy of destruction whereby Macbeth reaches the point of saying "I have supp'd full with horrors" (V,v,13). The relationship between eating and sleep as symbols of peace is summed up in Macbeth's definition of sleep as "chief nourisher in life's feast" (II,ii,40).

#### (v) Noise

While Miss Spurgeon noted the "reverberation of sound echoing over vast regions" <sup>1</sup> in the poetic imagery of Macbeth, she failed to observe the part played in the play by direct noise imagery. This

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<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare's Imagery, p.327.

primary noise imagery is, like the sleep imagery, concentrated at two points in the play, the scenes surrounding the murder of Duncan, and the last scenes which bring the downfall of Macbeth and his wife. Their fear and guilt during and after the murder are expressed largely in terms of sound:

Thou sure and firm-set earth,  
Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for  
The very stones prate of my whereabout,  
fear  
II,1,86-8

Hark! Peace!  
It was the owl that shriek'd, the fatal  
bellman ...  
II,11,2-3

Didst thou not hear a noise?  
I heard the owl scream and the crickets cry.  
II,11,14-15.

After the imaginary cries Macbeth has heard

Methought I heard a voice cry 'Sleep no more!'  
II,11,35

comes the real noise to shatter their peace once and for all, the endless knocking

Whence is that knocking?  
How is't with me, when every noise appals me?  
II,11,57-8.

Although it cannot wake Duncan, it does arouse the sleepers in the castle, and indeed throughout Scotland, to vengeance, and marks the end of peace in the land; the ominousness of the ten-times repeated



noise is perhaps increased by the fact that the knocks come in twos or threes, the significant number, to judge by the Porter's echo: "Knock, knock, knock .. Knock, knock, .. Knock, knock, knock .." etc. (II, i, 1-20). Violent sound in what should be the quiet night disturbs not only the castle; it has been generally an unruly night; Lennox and Macduff, the new arrivals, have heard tell of

Lamentings heard i' the air; strange screams  
of death,  
And prophesying with accents terrible  
Of dire combustion and confused events  
New hatch'd to the woeful time: the obscure  
bird  
Clamour'd the livelong night. II, i, 61-5.

As here the noise is connected with the theme of sleep and wakefulness, so in the sleep-walking scene, V, i, one of the things recalled by Lady Macbeth is the knocking at the gate

To bed, to bed, there's knocking at the gate ...  
V, i, 73-4.

But now the noise which ought to disturb Macbeth, the drums and alarms of approaching battle, and the cry of women, no longer affect him.

The cry is still, 'They come' V, v, 2.

but Macbeth has forgotten the taste of fear, and even the sad cry over the death of Lady Macbeth cannot

shake him:

Macbeth: What is that noise?

Seyton: It is the cry of women, my good lord.

Macbeth: I have almost forgot the taste of fears:  
The time has been, my senses would have  
cool'd  
To hear a night-shriek; and my fell of hair  
Would at a dismal treatise rouse and stir  
As life were in't ... Wherefore was that cry?

Seyton: The queen, my lord, is dead.

Macbeth: She should have died hereafter.  
V.v,7-17.

Macbeth goes on to his death in the clamour and  
alarms of battle; the din which once meant so much  
now means nothing, and life itself

is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing. V.v,26-8.

One other sound which echoes through the play  
is the thunder which greets each appearance of the  
Witches, and announces the apparitions in IV,i;  
the reasons Macbeth gives for his proposed killing  
of Macduff are

That I may tell pale-hearted fear it lies,  
And sleep in spite of thunder. IV,i,85-6.

Noise and fear are connected for him, until he loses  
all sense of fear. The poetic imagery of sound is  
linked with these primary patterns, and extends their  
significance; the knocking on the door brings fear

to Macbeth and heralds the terror to come in Scotland, and sound imagery, like the sleep and confusion imagery already noted, is another means of conveying this. It is particularly notable in IV,iii, where the exiled Scots discuss their land, whence the news is

Each new morn  
New widows howl, new orphans cry, new sorrows  
Strike heaven on the face, that it resounds  
As if it felt with Scotland and yell'd out  
Like syllable of doleour. IV,iii,4-8.

Scotland has become a place

Where sighs and groans and shrieks that rend  
the air  
Are made, not mark'd ... the dead man's knell  
Is there scarce ask'd for who. IV,iii,166-71.

What news there is, is not fit for the ears of human beings:

I have words  
That would be howl'd out in the desert air,  
Where hearing should not latch them.  
IV,iii,193-5.

Thus through the murder of Duncan, Macbeth learns to fear noise, and his growing insensitivity to it reflects the change evil works in him; at the same time the noise of terror, fear and misery is brought to the whole land of Scotland. It is perhaps part both of the irony and tragedy of Macbeth's downfall, that by the time Macduff can return to his ears the clamour of blood and death he has brought to



Witches:

Your children shall be kings I,iii,66

Do you not hope your children shall be kings?  
I,iii,118.

The sons of Duncan, the reigning king, and Fleance, whose issue will reign in the future, escape.

Macbeth's crimes are barren, bringing him only fear and sleeplessness, and it is ironical that Lady Macbeth should dedicate herself to barrenness for the sake of achieving nothing

Come, you spirits  
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,  
... Come to my woman's breasts  
And take my milk for gall ... I,v,41-9.

This terrible futility reaches its climax in the butchery of Macduff's wife and children, an act without reason. Meanwhile the Witches with their potent charm, the ingredients of which include

Finger of birth-strangled babe  
Ditch-deliver'd by a drab IV,i,30-1

have called up the apparitions; one is a bloody child which comes to speak words that echo through the last act

none of woman born  
Shall harm Macbeth. IV,i,80-1;

another is a child crowned and carrying a tree, and there is an obvious symbolism in each case. Macbeth can be harmed only by Macduff, who

was from his mother's womb  
Untimely ripp'd. V,viii,15-16.

It is as though Macbeth's unnatural deeds have put him beyond the reach of ordinary men, and Macduff, no woman's child, but as Malcolm calls him, "Child of integrity" (IV,iii,115) alone is given power to kill him. Macbeth has degenerated from murdering grown men in secret to butchering infants openly, but though he could kill the innocent, even at the last when Siward falls in battle, he could not destroy innocence itself.

#### (vii) Sight and Blindness

The murder of Duncan brings visions as well as clamorous noises to intrude on Macbeth's peace. Macbeth and his wife invoke the secrecy of darkness for their deeds, that all nature may be blind to what they do, but they cannot conceal their crimes from themselves, only from the world, by making

our faces vizards to our hearts,  
Disguising what they are. III,ii,34-5.

They are punished by the inward eye which brings such terrible visions to them, of the dagger, the ghost of Banquo, the show of kings, and the indelible blood on Lady Macbeth's hands. Before he has been roused by Lady Macbeth to the murder of Duncan, Macbeth calls for darkness:

Stars, hide your fires;  
Let not light see my black and deep desires:  
The eye wink at the hand; yet let that be,  
Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see.  
I,iv,50-3.

Lady Macbeth invokes the shroud of night in similar fashion:

That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,  
Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the  
dark,  
To cry 'Hold hold!'  
I,v,53-5.

Again before the murder of Banquo Macbeth calls on darkness to blind the world to what he is doing, and seeks to identify himself with the "black agents" of night, the bat and beetle, proverbially blind, the crow and the raven, things of darkness and evil:

Come, seeling night,  
Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day;  
And with thy bloody and invisible hand  
Cancel and tear to pieces that great bond  
Which keeps me pale!  
III,ii,46-50.

They take care to conceal their heart's purposes:

To beguile the time  
Look like the time; bear welcome in your eye  
I,v,64-5

wash this filthy witness from your hand  
II,ii,47

Masking the business from the common eye  
III,i,125.

But even Lady Macbeth suffers, who is cool enough

after the murder of Duncan, and ready to chide her husband about his visions,

'tis the eye of childhood  
That fears a painted devil. II,11,54-5

Get on your nightgown, lest occasion call us,  
And show us to be watchers. II,11,70-1,

for she herself becomes a perpetual watcher, unable to sleep for the sight of blood on her hands; and instead of darkness, "she has light by her continually; 'tis her command" (V,1,26-7), for darkness is of hell, "hell is murky".

You see, her eyes are open. V,1,28

says the Doctor, speaking more truth than he knows; her eyes are indeed open now to the horror of deeds she had not seen as crimes.

Macbeth, unlike his wife, was aware before the murder of Duncan that his crime could not really be concealed:

heaven's cherubim, horsed  
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,  
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye  
I,vii,22-4

and straightway after the murder the realisation comes again

Look on't again I dare not. II,11,52

What hands are here? Ha! they pluck out mine  
eyes  
II,11,59.

'ts crowd on him; there is the vision of the



dagger before Duncan's murder, the appearance of Banquo's ghost, the three apparitions produced by the Witches spells, and finally the show of kings to sear his eyeballs, until he cries "But no more sights" (IV,1,155). There is no need of more; by now the futility of his deeds is apparent, since Banquo's children will reign in Scotland, and the evil nature of what he has done is equally plain to him. Concealment is unnecessary, and Macduff's wife and children are killed openly. Macbeth grows weary of life which has no future for him, except "Curses, not loud, but deep" (V,111,27), and where perhaps all that he sees is only a reminder of the past

Seyton! - I am sick at heart  
When I behold - Seyton, I say ...  
V,111,19-20.

Macbeth finds at last the truth of Macduff's description of Duncan's death, which he saw as "the great doom's image" (II,111,83), and the return of Malcolm, of whom Ross says

your eye in Scotland  
Would create soldiers, make our women fight,  
To doff their dire distresses. IV,111,186-8

brings his downfall.

(viii) Smaller Groups

(a) Clothes

Each of the groups of images considered seems to centre on and as it were irradiate from one or more vivid presentation of the image in stage action. In this respect, and also in respect of their greater size numerically, they differ from the groups which remain to be considered. For this reason the remaining groups have been labelled generally as smaller groups, though like those examined they consist of iterative references as well as poetic images, and have a dramatic as well as a poetic function. Indeed the difference just noted is only relative, for in this highly integrated play nearly all the images connect at some point with the action. This is certainly true of the clothing images, the group which Miss Spurgeon found most important in the play as revealing Shakespeare's mental picture of Macbeth as a dwarf in clothes too big for him<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p.324-7. It is notable that Miss Spurgeon cites seven images, only one, or possibly two, of which suggest this picture of Macbeth as dressed in clothes too large for him.

now does his title  
Hang loose about him, like a giant's robe  
Upon a dwarfish thief. V,ii,20-2.

However this may be, a very significant feature of this group seems to be the stress on the action of putting on or taking off clothes. Honours, titles, health, wrongs, hopes, soldiership, are all things imaged as being worn;

Why do you dress me  
In borrow'd robes? I,iii,108-9

Macbeth: opinions ...  
Which should be worn now in their newest gloss  
Not cast aside so soon.

Lady Mac: Was the hope drunk  
Wherein you dress'd yourself? I,vii,33-6

Let's briefly put on manly readiness  
II,iii,139

Who wear our health but sickly in his life  
III,vii,107

wear thou thy wrongs,  
The title is affeer'd! IV,iii,33-4

make our women fight  
To doff their dire distresses. IV,iii,187-8

put we on  
Industrious soldiership. V,iv,15.

Connected with these are the occasions when dressing is important in the action: after the murder of Duncan Lady Macbeth warns her husband, "Get on your nightgown, lest occasion call us" (II,ii,70), and the advice is repeated in the sleep-walking scene (V,i,68). The nightgown is the dress for

sleeping, and it is just this that Macbeth has effectively put off by the murder of Duncan; now it is only a temporary disguise. Soon he calls all to put on manly readiness, as they must until Duncan is avenged; under the new regime Macduff is naturally enough afraid

Lest our old robes sit easier than our new  
II, iv, 38

Here as in the images cited above there is one of two senses, or sometimes a double sense: sufferings, honours, titles, readiness, these and many more are all things to be put on or put off as opportunity offers or occasion demands, transitory things, and in a sense inessential, appearances, the surface of life. It is in this sense that Macbeth's titles hang loose on him; and that

He cannot buckle his distemper'd cause  
Within the belt of rule. V, i, 15-16

rule is only a pretence or appearance he maintains. The other sense is very close to this, of clothing as disguise, or means of concealment; Macbeth's titles and robes conceal his true nature for a time, while the Scottish lords have to conceal their true nature from Macbeth; clothing serves as Banquo says to hide "our naked frailties",

That suffer in exposure II, iii, 132-3.

(b) Sickness

There are two groups of images which increase in number from act to act. One is of sickness, a thing unknown until after the murder of Duncan, except perhaps for the strangely prophetic note of the First Witch in her tale of the sailor's wife whose refusal to give food brings punishment to her husband:

Sleep shall neither night nor day  
Hang upon his pent-house lid;  
He shall live a man forbid;  
Weary se'nnights nine times nine  
Shall he dwindle, peak and pine

I,iii,19-23.

This offers a slight parallel to Macbeth's punishment, who likewise dwindle, suffers sleeplessness and lives a man forbid, and whose wife is largely responsible for the original crime, Duncan's death. This however is perhaps merely fanciful. At the murder of Duncan

some say the earth  
Was feverous, and did shake II,iii,65-6

and from this time sickness attends Macbeth; life itself is described as a fever

Duncan is in his grave;  
After life's fitful fever he sleeps well  
III,ii,22-3

and becomes indeed a kind of sickness for him.

While Banquo is alive he is one

Who wear our health but sickly in his life,  
Which in his death were perfect.

III,1,107-8

but Banquo's death brings no cure, only the "strange infirmity" (III,iv,86) caused by the ghost's appearance. It is perhaps through this infirmity, displayed publicly in this central scene of the play, that Macbeth's guilt is shown; after the questionable scene between Hecate and the Witches, there follows directly the discussion between Lennox and a bard (III,vi) in which Macbeth's guilt is for the first time definitely implied, and here also is the first news of a possible uprising. Macbeth too comes into the open, and no longer cares

though the treasure  
Of nature's germens tumble all together,  
Even till destruction sicken. IV,1,58-60

so long as he obtains his will. To Malcolm he is

This tyrant, whose sole name blisters our  
tongues  
IV,111,13

and Scotland itself is diseased because of Macbeth,

O nation miserable ...  
When shalt thou see thy wholesome days again  
IV,111,103-5

good men's lives  
Expire before the flowers in their cups,  
Dying ere they sicken. IV,111,171-3

Meet we the medicine of the sickly weal,  
And with him pour we in our country's purge  
Each drop of us. V,11,27.

It is as if Macbeth's infirmity, made public, is transmitted to the whole nation as fear and violence. Lady Macbeth is afflicted also; her sleep-walking and troubled fancies are a disease (V.1,65; V.1,80), if a disease of mind rather than of body, and like Macbeth's sickness at heart (V.111,19), incurable. Macbeth cries

Throw physic to the dogs; I'll none of it.  
V.111,47

and immediately afterwards, with a grim irony,

If thou couldst, doctor, cast  
The water of my land, find her disease,  
And purge it to a sound and pristine health,  
I would applaud thee to the very echo ...  
V.111,50-3.

Like the king's evil, the cure of which Malcolm wonders at, the malady of the land, and that of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth

convinces  
The great assay of art. IV.111,142-3.

As with the king's evil, only holiness can cure the sickly weal; and there is no cure for Macbeth and his wife. In the last scenes of the play there are no sickness images, which are chiefly concentrated at the end of Act IV and in the first scenes of Act V, perhaps because the land is restored again. These images are closely related to the action; Macbeth's behaviour in the ghost scene is spoken of as an infirmity; Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking is a

disease; and doctors appear in IV,iii, and attending Lady Macbeth (V,i; V,iii), in both cases only to emphasise that the disease concerned, the king's evil in IV,iii, the "stuffed bosom" and the land's affliction in V,i and V,iii, are beyond the reach of medicine and in need of the divine.

### (c) Plants

The second group of images which increases in number towards the end is connected with plants. Much of this imagery in the last two acts is connected with the prophecy

Macbeth shall never vanquish'd be until  
Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill  
Shall come against him. IV,1,92-4

and it is the actual bringing of the wood to Macbeth's castle in the form of "leafy screens" (V,vi,1) carried by Malcolm's soldiers that gives the plant images importance. Duncan had greeted Banquo, returned from battle, with

I have begun to plant thee; and will labour  
To make thee full of growing. I,iv,28-9

and Banquo replied

There if I grow,  
The harvest is your own. I,iv,32-3.

Macbeth let neither grow; after the murder of Duncan he remembered what the Witches had replied to Banquo's question



If you can look into the seeds of time,  
And say which grain will grow and which will  
not,  
Speak then to me ... I, iii, 58-60

and realised that he had gained nothing unless  
Banquo and his son were killed;

Upon my head they plac'd a fruitless crown,  
And put a barren sceptre in my gripe  
III, i, 61-2.

To redeem this personal barrenness, Macbeth is ready  
to lay waste to Scotland, and allow the winds and waters  
to confound the earth,

Though bladed corn be lodg'd and trees blown  
down;  
... though the treasure  
Of nature's germens tumble all together  
IV, i, 55-60.

Lennox pictures Scotland as choked with weeds,  
Malcolm as the "sovereign flower",

pour we in our country's purge  
Each drop of us.

Lennox: Or so much as it needs,  
To dew the sovereign flower and drown the  
weeds.  
V, ii, 28-30.

The mingling with sickness and cleansing imagery is  
significant here. For in spite of Macbeth's  
incredulity

Who can impress the forest, bid the tree  
Unfix his earth-bound roots? IV, i, 95-6.

The wood does come against him, not before Macbeth  
suggests again his own barrenness, and old age,

I have lived long enough: my way of life  
Is fall'n into the sear, the yellow leaf.  
V.iii,22-3.

Malcolm, the "sovereign flower", and his men, marching with leafy branches in front of them are in a sense restoring fertility to a waste land, and as in the Grail legends, the old and diseased king, Macbeth, must be killed by the young and virile Malcolm. The plant and sickness images, linked in this way, grow numerically through the play, and each group is related to vivid dramatic action in acts IV and V. Perhaps the third apparition, the child crowned with a tree in its hand, which gives Macbeth the strange message about Birnam Wood, is a symbol of the young Malcolm, about to cure and bring back fertility to the sick land, and who, after the victory over Macbeth, turns at the end of the play to consider

What's more to do,  
Which would be planted newly with the time  
V.viii,64-5.

#### (d) Flying, Riding, Speed

There is also one group of images which decreases in number from act to act, images of flying, riding, speed. A sense of urgency and haste is maintained from the opening scene with its

When the battle's lost and won,  
That will be ere the set of sun.

I, i, 4-5

until after the murder of Duncan. Messengers arrive; the bleeding sergeant and Ross bring Duncan news of battle; Ross and Angus greet Macbeth and Banquo, and all four return to Duncan. After this there is the swift journey to Macbeth's castle of Inverness. The sense of speed is everywhere; not merely in physical movement,

What a haste looks through his eyes!

I, ii, 46

As thick as hail  
Came post with post

I, iii, 97

The swiftest wing of recompense is slow  
To overtake thee.

I, iv, 17-18

We coured him at the heels, and had a  
purpose  
To be his parveyor; but he rides well;  
And his great love, sharp as his spur, hath  
help him  
To his home before us.

I, vi, 21-4.

This hurried movement is accompanied by a compression of time for Lady Macbeth; she has no time to prepare for Duncan's arrival:

Attend: The king comes here to-night.

Lady Mac:

Thou'rt mad to say it:

Is not thy master with him? who wer't so,  
Would have inform'd for preparation.

I, v, 32-4.

In anticipation of Macbeth's gaining the throne she feels "the future in the instant" (I,v) and the one night's business of murdering Duncan

shall to all our nights and days to come  
Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom.  
I,v,70-1.

All time is concentrated in that terrible night for Macbeth also, and it is from this background of haste and urgency that his great images derive much of their power:

that but this blow  
Might be the be-all and the end-all here,  
But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,  
We'd jump the life to come. I,vii,4-7.

He has not Lady Macbeth's confidence in the outcome, and sense of future greatness, but feels rather that

pity, like a naked new-born babe,  
Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubim,  
hors'd  
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,  
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye.  
I,vii,21-4.

Immediately after the deed he feels the pressure of time demanding swift action; the attendants must be killed

The expedition of my violent love  
Outran the pauser, reason. II,iii,116-7

and then Banquo, become so oppressive, that

every minute of his being thrusts  
Against my near'st of life III,i,117-8

Yet he has not time to do what he would; Malcolm and Donalbain take flight, Fleance escapes, and Macduff is in England before Macbeth can harm him; his deeds are anticipated, and while he had time to ponder over the murder of Duncan, the pressure is now so great that action is all there is time for:

Time, thou anticipat'st my dread exploits:  
The flighty purpose never is o'ertook  
Unless the deed go with it; from this moment  
The very firstlings of my heart shall be  
The firstlings of my hand. IV.i,144-8.

When in the last act Macbeth, who has caused all others to flee, is left alone waiting for the approaching armies, time which had moved too fast for him slows almost to a stop

To-morrow and to-morrow, and to-morrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day  
V.v,19-20.

Now it is his turn to flee he cannot:

If this which he avouches does appear,  
There is no flying hence nor tarrying here.  
V.v,47-8

They have tied me to a stake; I cannot fly.  
But, bear-like, I must fight the course.  
V.vii,1-2.

So the images of riding and flying and the passage of time which are concentrated about the murder of Duncan, and in Macbeth's mouth late in the play, spring from the action: there is constant motion,

arrivals and departures, the sudden flight of the king's sons, the murder of Banquo while he is out riding, the flight of Macduff. There is frequent reference to horses, and the confusion accompanying Duncan's death is imaged in terms of his horses

And Duncan's horses - a thing most strange  
and certain -  
Beauteous and swift, the minions of their race,  
Turn'd wild in nature, broke their stalls,  
flung out,  
Contending 'gainst obedience. II, iv, 14-17.

This is the context which makes them memorable, and gives concentrated meaning to such an image as Macbeth's

To prick the sides of my intent, but only  
Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself  
And falls on the other. I.vii.25-8.

And this physical motion is linked with the passage of time, which moves too fast for Macbeth until his virtual imprisonment in Dunsinane, and too slowly for Scotland:

Some holy angel  
Fly to the court of England, and unfold  
His message ere he come, that a swift blessing  
May soon return to this our suffering country  
Under a hand accursed! III, vi, 45-9.



examined above are linked, the heaven-hell opposition, angels and damnation, sound imagery in the "trumpet-tongued" angels, and the sense of riding at speed on the "couriers of the air". There are also links with the sight pattern, and the infant as symbol of innocence or pity appears also. Finally the last line may be noted, which has connections with water and cleansing imagery, foreshadowing Malcolm's image of the state of Scotland under Macbeth's rule, "our country ... it weeps, it bleeds ..." (IV, iiii, 39-40). Another very concentrated passage is Macbeth's cry after the murder of Duncan

Methought I heard a voice cry 'Sleep no more!  
 Macbeth does murder sleep, the innocent sleep,  
 Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of  
 care,  
 The death of each day's life, sore labour's  
 bath,  
 Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,  
 Chief nourisher in life's feast'.

II.ii.35-4.

Sleep is here defined in a succession of images linked to major patterns in the play; the "ravell'd sleeve" has connections with clothing imagery, and sleep as death, a place of oblivion is an image that occurs in another form in

After life's fitful fever he sleeps well  
III.11.23.



"Sore labour's bath" fits into the cleansing imagery, while in the last two lines sleep appears as a medicine to cure sickness, and as a nourisher, and is thus linked with two other groups, sickness and food. An equally rewarding analysis could be made of many more of the great poetic images in the play. Macbeth's well-known lines on the death of his queen:

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day.  
To the last syllable of recorded time,  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death. Out, out brief candle!  
V.v.19ff.

represent the culmination of the darkness and light imagery, but these lines have links with other patterns; the speed of the many images of motion has here slowed to a crawl in "creeps" and "Life's but a walking shadow", and there is the tremendous sound image at the end of this speech. The three-fold repetition of "to-morrow" is also significant.

Not all the images of Macbeth have been examined here, and by no means all the relevant images have been cited under the various headings. Perhaps sufficient illustration has been provided of the way in which the primary images presented through the action or iterative words take on all kinds of new significance through their connection

with overall patterns of poetic images, and also of the way in which these overall patterns derive much of their richness from their basis in the direct images concentrated at the most tense points in the play. Direct images often do not appear in themselves to have such complexity as poetic images, and they are frequently ignored in the discussion of poetic imagery. But indeed it is only through our knowledge of their imaginative context, which includes the direct images from which they spring, that the poetic images come to have their power. As has been shown, the great poetic images knit together the various strands of imagery of all kinds, direct, poetic, and iterative words. To consider them in isolation, and from the point of view solely of their subject-matter, is thus to ignore a great part of their rich significance. For this significance is a result of the interaction of those various elements which together comprise dramatic imagery.

## CHAPTER 6

### The Dramatic Imagery of 'Hamlet'

## HAMLET

Hamlet is much longer and moves more slowly, though not less inevitably, than Macbeth. It lacks the general turbulence, confusion and sense of speed of the latter play, and the court of Denmark, the centre of the action, the home of Polonius and Orazio, has a stately, formal atmosphere, being a place of ceremony and courtly accomplishment in arms, learning, music and rhetoric. This court appearance conceals the murder, lust and corruption which are at the heart of the play. These two aspects of Hamlet are revealed and given extension throughout the play and even into the world outside largely by means of two groups of dramatic imagery, one relatively pleasant, relating to the court, the other unpleasant, relating to the hidden corruption. The poetic images in both groups spring from or culminate in primary groups of direct images, and through the interrelation of direct images, and the interchange of subject-matter, object-matter and reference, interconnect and fuse at many points. The separate treatment of the two groups in this chapter is thus somewhat arbitrary, but draws attention to the way in which opposed aspects of

the play are revealed through imagery.<sup>1</sup>

## I "Noble rite and formal ostentation": The Court Atmosphere

### (1) Formality and Artificiality

The immediate background of Hamlet is the court of the King of Denmark, in the environments of which the whole action takes place, and an atmosphere of formality, artificiality, stateliness, pervades the play. Affairs of state enter into the action, treating with ambassadors for Norway and England (I,ii; II,ii; V,ii), giving Laertes leave to go abroad (I,ii), preparations for a possible war with Norway (I,i), allowing the army of Fortinbras passage through Denmark (IV,iv), and there are several state entries, for example into the council scene (I,ii), the play scene (III,ii), and the final scene of the duel (V,ii). When the major characters speak in public, and not to private

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<sup>1</sup> Certain aspects of this opposition have been observed, although relatively little has been written on the imagery of Hamlet. Una Ellis-Fermor noted a contrast between 'public' and 'private' imagery of Claudius (The Frontiers of Drama, p.88), W. Clemen has observed connections between imagery and action at various points in the play, and has extended the generally accepted remarks of Miss Spurgeon that sickness imagery is "dominant", by linking this imagery with poison, weeds and decay; he thus found corruption to be a "basic motif" in Hamlet (The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery, pp.114-8).

friends or in soliloquy, they are given generally a leisured, formal way of speaking, using many words to say little, freely amplifying and illustrating, as in the King's complaint against Hamlet,

'tis a fault to heaven,  
A fault against the dead, a fault to nature,  
To reason most absurd; whose common theme  
Is death of fathers, and who still hath cried,  
From the first corpse till he that died to-day,  
'This must be so'. I,ii,101-6

or in Hamlet's welcome to the news that players are coming

He that plays the king shall be welcome; his  
majesty shall have tribute of me; the  
adventurous knight shall use his foil and  
target; the lover shall not sigh gratis ...  
II,ii,332-5.

It appears in the rhetorical devices of Hamlet's excuse to Laertes, "Was't Hamlet wrong'd Laertes? Never Hamlet" (V,ii,244), in the threefold expansion of the King's

His liberty is full of threats to all;  
To you yourself, to us, to every one.  
IV,i,14-5

in the marked contrast between the prose speech of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to their 'friend' Hamlet, and their rhetorical verse speech in their intercourse with the King; and also in the formal balance of such lines as

King: Thanks, Rosencrantz and gentle Guildenstern.

Queen: Thanks, Guildenstern and gentle Rosencrantz.  
II, ii, 33-4.

Rhetorical artifice becomes conscious in the language of Polonius,

That he is mad, 'tis true; 'tis true 'tis pity;  
And pity 'tis 'tis true: a foolish figure;  
But farewell it, for I will use no art.  
II, ii, 97-9

who is ready with criticism "That's an ill phrase" (II, ii, 111), "That's good; 'nobled queen' is good" (II, ii, 527), and also in the affectation of Orazio and the stiff diction and formal personification of the players' speeches. This 'public' manner of speaking tends to sound similar in the mouths of different characters; it is artificial, though it seems to be more or less habitual to Polonius and Laertes, and may act as a screen behind which true thoughts and feelings may be hidden. Thus Claudius has a more direct and personal manner when praying, when trying to obtain information, when plotting with an accomplice, but when in public he asks Rosencrantz<sup>1</sup> and Guildenstern to watch Hamlet, he says,

---

I

So in the Folio. The quartos omit "I" and read "so call it".

Something have you heard  
Of Hamlet's transformation: so I call it,  
Since not th' exterior, nor the inward man  
Resembles that it was ... II,ii,4-7

This is the courtly mode of speaking, and it is notable how close the cadence of this passage is to a speech for which the Queen rebukes Polonius in the same scene

Your noble son is mad;  
Mad call I it; for, to define true madness,  
What is't, but to be nothing else but mad?  
II,ii,92-4

It is the vice of Polonius that he exaggerates the worst features, but on the occasion of this second passage, the King and Queen are eager for information and have no time for rhetoric; Gertrude cries "More matter, with less art".

This element of formality is maintained in various other ways. In the first place, the strong element of moralising and sententiousness in the play contributes to it. Not only is Polonius ready with windy advice for Laertes, but Laertes is equally ready to advise Ophelia, and Hamlet gives<sup>1</sup> general instructions to the Players. A tendency

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<sup>1</sup>  
This instruction to the players seems to be in accordance with the usual precepts of the time concerning rhetorical delivery, cf. B. L. Joseph, Elizabethan Acting, p.146. Hamlet's advice, "Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus,"  
(continued ...)



1

to moralise or draw general conclusions is common to many characters, as in these examples:

Our indiscretion sometimes serves us well  
When our deep plots do pall; and that should  
teach us  
There's a divinity that shapes our ends  
Rough-hew them how we will. V.ii,6-11

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but use all gently; .. suit the action to the word, the word to the action", may be compared with T. Heywood's An Apology for Actors, 1612, which has on signature C3<sup>v</sup>. "... Rhetorike, it not onely emboldens a scholler to speake, but instructs him to speake well ... neither to buffet his deake like a mad-man, nor stand in his place like a livelesse Image. ... It instructs him to fit his phrases to his action, And his action to his phrase, and his pronuntiation to them both". Hamlet's instructions regarding rhetorical delivery have thus a special significance in relation to the courtly mode of speaking, and to his own pretensions to be a scholar, a fellow-student of Horatio.

1

M. P. Tilley in his A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, Ann Arbor, 1950, has indexed proverbs in Shakespeare's plays, and found 140 quoted or echoed in Hamlet, as compared with 88 in Lear, 71 in Macbeth and 90 in Othello. Some are cited, e.g. Polonius's "springs to catch woodcocks" (I,iii,115); some are turned into blank verse lines, e.g. "Virtue itself 'scapes not calumnious strokes" (I,iii,38) from the proverb "Envy shoots at the fairest mark"; "Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice" (I,iii,68), from "Hear much but speak little"; some are transformed, as "saying is one thing, doing another" into Laertes' extended sentence:

Then if he says he loves you  
It fits your wisdom so far to believe it  
As he in his particoular act and place  
May give his saying deed. I,iii,24-7.

Nature is fine in love, and where 'tis fine,  
It sends some precious instance of itself  
After the thing it loves. IV.v,161-3

diseases desperate grown  
By desperate appliance are relieved,  
Or not at all. IV,iii,9-11.

Secondly there are many descriptive images, often long, which provide formal examples and illustrations, and have the effect of set speeches, and these connect with the several formal set descriptions in the play, such as Horatio's account of events in Denmark (I,i), the Ghost's account of his murder (I,v), Gertrude's description of Ophelia's death (IV,vii), and Hamlet's description of the sea-battle (V,ii). The use of studied descriptive images and similes is frequent, sometimes to produce a drop in dramatic tension, as in Horatio's elaborate image before the second appearance of the Ghost,

In the most high and palmy state of Rome,  
A little ere the mightiest Julius fell,  
The graves stood tenantless ...  
I,i,113ff.

more often without any such immediate purpose, as in these lines:

that noble and most sovereign reason  
Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and  
harsh  
III,i,165-6

Whose whisper o'er the world's diameter  
As level as the cannon to his blank  
Transports his poison'd shot ...  
IV, i, 41-3

Examples gross as earth exhort me:  
Witness this army of such mass and charge ...  
IV, iv, 46ff.  
this,  
Like to a murdering-piece in many places  
Gives me superfluous death IV, v, 94-6.

Connected with this usage are elaborate set speeches such as Hamlet's famous words on man (II, ii, 304ff), and also the elaborate comparisons made by Hamlet, of himself and a pipe (III, iii, 360ff), Rosencrantz and a sponge (IV, ii, 11ff), and his goading of Polonius who agrees that a cloud is the image of whatever Hamlet chooses to say (III, iii, 393ff). The references to painting and portraits in the play may have some relation to these descriptive images, as when Hamlet peruses Ophelia's face "As he would draw it" (II, i, 91), or sees by the "image" of his own cause the "portraiture" of that of Laertes (V, ii, 77); they culminate in the direct image of the closet scene, when Hamlet displays and describes the pictures of his father and Claudius. (III, iv, 53).

Thirdly, a very common device in the play is the use of hendiadys, words of similar meaning coupled by

"and", which helps to give dignity and weight to the language.<sup>1</sup> In the first act there are 47 examples in which the meanings of the words used are almost identical, 20 in which the identity is not so close; the use of Latin and Saxon elements in combination, which occurs occasionally as in "extravagant and erring" (I,1,154), "sweet and commendable" (I,111,87), "encompassment and drift" (II,1,10), adds to the weighty effect. The following couplings of words are among those which occur in the first scene, "fear and wonder", "sensible and true avouch", "gross and scope", "food and diet", "post-haste and romage", "high and palmy", "squeak and gibber", "so hallow'd and so gracious".

All these formal elements, elaboration, the use of studied descriptive imagery, the sententious moral, the use of hendiadys are present in some of the 'public' speeches, such as the court flattery of Rosencrantz;

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<sup>1</sup> Attention has been drawn to hendiadys as a feature of Shakespeare's style at this period by G. H. W. Rylands, see Words and Poetry pp.171ff., and W. Empson has also noted its use and the peculiar ambiguities it offers, in The Seven Types of Ambiguity, pp.94-101.

The single and peculiar life is bound,  
With all the strength and armour of the mind,  
To keep itself from noyance; but much more  
That spirit upon whose weal depends and rest  
The lives of many. The cease of majesty  
Dies not alone; but like a gulf, doth draw  
What's near it with it: it is a massy wheel,  
Fix'd on the summit of the highest mount,  
To whose huge spokes ten thousand lesser things  
Are mortised and adjoin'd; which, when it falls,  
Each small annexment, petty consequence,  
Attends the boisterous ruin. Never alone  
Did the king sigh, but with a general groan.  
III,iii,11-23.

This courtly, artificial mode of speaking appears in various extreme forms in the moralising and rhetoric of Polonius, the affectation of Osric, both of whom, as Hamlet demonstrates, will say what gives pleasure rather than speak the truth, and also in the formal personification, stiff diction and rhyming couplets of the players' speeches. A sense of formality extends throughout the play, especially the court-scenes, and the outbursts of passion in Hamlet's soliloquies, in his interviews with Gertrude and Ophelia gain more force by contrast. It appears in the proverbial personifications of such famous lines as

Frailty, thy name is woman! I,ii,146

Occasion smiles upon a second leave.  
I,iii,54

and stateliness of diction is matched by the

relatively static quality of notable direct images in the play, the stately march of the Ghost, the static pictorial effect of the dumb-show in the play-scene, the contemplation of skulls in a graveyard.<sup>2</sup> One function of this stateliness is to suggest the court atmosphere, and direct image, poetic image and

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1

This is not to suggest that the play is static, or that its dialogue is static and undramatic. One feature of the imagery which continually enlivens the dialogue is the very frequent personification or near-personification, as in the lines "will not let belief take hold of him" (I,ii,24), "discretion fought with nature" (I,ii,5), rising in scenes of passion, such as the 'closet' scene to most startling and complex images, "confront the visage of offence" (III,iii,46), "act that blurs the grace and blush of modesty" (III,iv,40), "heaven's face doth glow" (III,iv,46), "sense to ecstasy was ne'er so thrall'd" (III,iv,74). There are many more such images, but one special feature of them should be noted, the contrast between the intensity and natural quality of the images cited, and those formal personifications which occur in courtly speeches, speeches of reflection, such as Hamlet's soliloquies, in the speeches of the players, and have an artificial or formal quality; examples are the conventional personification of the "strumpet Fortune" (II,ii,228ff., II,ii,487ff.), and of Love, Grief, Fortune, Joy, and the references to Phoebus, Neptune and Tellus in the conversation between the Player King and Queen (II,ii,165ff.).

2

There is an interesting contrast with Macbeth, where the visual impact of the dancing Witches, the confusion which follows the knocking, the sleep-walking, is of movement primarily, and although the play scene in Hamlet ends with the hurried exit of the King, there is no suggestion in the text of a confusion similar to that which ends the banquet in Macbeth.

stylistic device combine to evoke the feeling of "formal ostentation" (IV,v,215), the lack of which in his father's burial rites so angers Laertes. Another function will be considered later, in relation to the deceit and spying which form so much of the play's action.

### (11) War and Arms

Another aspect of the court at Elsinore, connected with this formality and stateliness is presented through imagery of war, perhaps the most prominent single group of images in the play. It is not war in the modern sense, but has an air of chivalry, as is reflected in the challenges made by Fortinbras to Hamlet's father

Our last king ...  
Was, as you know, by Fortinbras of Norway,  
Thereto prick'd on by a most emulate pride,  
Dared to the combat. I,1,80-4

and is to be undertaken in the pursuit of honour, as by Fortinbras:

this army of such mass and charge  
Led by a delicate and tender prince  
Whose spirit with divine ambition puff'd  
Makes mouths at the invisible event ...  
IV,iv,47-50.

Hamlet himself meets his death through accepting a challenge - the exercise of arms is a courtly

accomplishment. There is, however, a very real warlikeness about the state of Denmark which is kept constantly before an audience. Several direct images help to establish this. The play opens with a group of men on guard against possible attack from Norway, and the Ghost armed from head to foot "with solemn march Goes slow and stately by" (I,ii,201); later, Fortinbras with his army marches across the stage, and Claudius has to put his "Switzers" on guard against the rabble led by Laertes (IV,v); Hamlet dies in a fencing match, and the play ends as it began on a warlike note with the entrance of Fortinbras who says

Let four captains  
Bear Hamlet, like a soldier, to the stage ...  
V,ii,406-7

and a "peal of ordnance" is shot off. The dead Hamlet is given martial honours, and this martial background is sustained throughout the play by means of poetic imagery. Hamlet himself has much war imagery:

Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason  
I,iv,28

the adventurous knight shall use his foil  
and target ..  
II,ii,333

The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune  
III,i,56



thou art e'en as just a man  
As e'er my conversation coped withal ...  
A man that Fortune's buffets and rewards  
Hast ta'en with equal thanks. III,ii,59-73

For 'tis the sport to have the engineer  
Hoist with his own petar; and't shall go hard  
But I will delve one yard below their mines  
And blow them at the moon. III,iv,206-9

words ... much too light for the bore of the  
matter IV,vi,25.

When the players come, it is of the Trojan war that  
Hamlet asks to hear, and he takes an active part in a  
sea-battle with pirates. Imagery of war is  
distributed also amongst the other characters, with  
the exception of Ophelia; Bernardo, Claudius,  
Laertes, Polonius, Rosenerantz, Horatio, all speak  
in terms of war:

Bernardo: let us once again assail your ears,  
That are so fortified against our story ...  
I,i,31

Polonius: Set your entreatments at a higher rate  
Than a command to parley. I,iii,12-3

Rosenerantz:  
The single and peculiar life is bound,  
With all the strength and armour of the mind  
III,iii,11-12

Claudius: Whose whisper o'er the world's diameter,  
As level as the cannon to his blank,  
Transports his poison'd shot ...  
IV,i,41-3

When sorrows come, they come not single  
spies,  
But in battalions. IV,v,78-9

Laertes: keep you in the rear of your affection,  
Out of the shot and danger of desire  
I,iii,34-5.

Even Gertrude, the "imperial jointress to this warlike state" (I,ii,9) speaks in similar terms to Hamlet:

as the sleeping soldiers in the alarm,  
Your bedded hair, like life in excrements,  
Starts up ...  
III,iv,120-2.

In this way the impact of the direct images of war, which occur at the beginning, the end, and at two points in Act IV, is extended throughout the play. A martial bearing in life and martial honours in death are a mark of nobility and honour. The Ghost of Hamlet's father appears armed and moves "with martial stalk" (I,i,65), and part of Hamlet's praise of him is that in contrast to Claudius he had

An eye like Mars, to threaten and command.  
III,iv,57.

The anger of Laertes is roused by the "obscure burial" of his father,

No trophy, sword, nor hatchment o'er his bones,  
No noble rite, nor formal ostentation.  
IV,v,214-5.

Indeed war is an honourable occupation; the story of the death of Priam brings tears to Hamlet's eyes (II,ii,542), and his own feelings are that

Rightly to be great  
Is not to stir without great argument,  
But greatly to find quarrel in a straw  
When honour's at the stake. IV,v,53-6.

It is this honour that governs Laertes in his quarrel with Hamlet; when Hamlet apologises, Laertes says that he is "satisfied in nature", but

in my terms of honour  
I stand aloof; and will no reconciliation,  
Till by some elder masters, of known honour,  
I have a voice and precedent of peace.

V.ii,257-60

Even the grave-diggers pun on "arms", and Adam is proved a gentleman as the first that ever bore arms (V.i,37), and in this scene Hamlet muses on the dust of Alexander and Caesar (V.i,229ff.), two great generals of antiquity. War is idealised by such suggestions in the play, and as ability in war is a mark of nobility, and skill in the use of weapons the duty of a courtier, so achievement in war brings glory, and it is "divine ambition" that causes Fortinbras to make war for the sake of a worthless "patch of ground" (IV.iv,18).

### (iii) Scholarship

A further courtly accomplishment is scholarship, and Horatio is Hamlet's "fellow-student" (I.ii,177). There are a number of images relating to books and reading, and again these are connected with direct images in three scenes in the play; one occurs in the first act when Hamlet takes out his "tables" and writes down

one may smile and smile and be a villain.  
I,v,107

Later on, first Hamlet, and then Ophelia make show of reading from a book on the stage (II,ii,170ff.; III,1,44ff.). Hamlet says to the Ghost

Yea, from the table of my memory  
I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,  
All saws of books, all forms, all pressures  
past,  
That youth and observation copied there;  
And thy commandment all alone shall live  
Within the book and volume of my brain ...  
I,v,98-103.

This bookishness appears elsewhere; Hamlet recognises that the actors are "the abstract and brief chronicles of the time" (II,ii,548), and is ready with the best learned advice on delivery and action, on the basis that "the purpose of playing ... is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image .." (III,ii,212). He writes verse himself, badly, and admires "an excellent play, well digested in the scenes" (II,ii,458), a bombastic speech from which moves him to tears. Hamlet is not the only character who has such imagery as

And stand a comma 'tween their amities  
V,ii,42.

Horatio is also a "scholar", which qualifies him for speaking to the Ghost (I,i,42), and Polonius and

**Claudia also:**

I know you must be edified by the margin  
ere you had done V.11.162

what might you,  
Or my dear majesty your queen here, think,  
If I had play'd the desk or table-book  
II.ii.134-6

An understanding simple and unschool'd.  
I.11.97

And we did think it writ down in our duty  
To let you know of it. I, 11, 222-3.

Linked with these images are the classical references in the play, which also connect with imagery of war. The players who visit Elsinore are capable of performing any kind of drama; according to Polonius "Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light" (II,ii,395), and Hamlet hears a speech relating to the Trojan war. Heroes of antiquity are mentioned several times; Hamlet says that Claudius is "no more like my father Than I to Hercules" (I,ii,152), and relates himself to Hercules twice later in the play. When he meets the ghost, he thinks of the first of Hercules' tasks:

My fate cries out,  
And makes each petty artery in this body  
As hardy as the Nemean lion's nerve.

and after the quarrel with Laertes he cries

Let Hercules himself do what he may,  
The cat will mew and dog will have his day.  
V.1.315-6.

In the graveyard scene Hamlet speaks of Caesar and Alexander; in the first scene Horatio compares the ominous events afflicting Denmark with the strange happenings that occurred

In the most high and palmy state of Rome,  
A little ere the mightiest Julius fell ...  
I, i, 113-4

and Polonius who had acted in the university had played the part of Caesar. Roman virtues would seem to be Hamlet's aspiration, as he admires Horatio's calmness

Give me that man  
That is not passion's slave ... III, i, 76-7

but for his own part too readily gives way to passion,

let not ever  
The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom  
III, ii, 411-2.

Horatio is indeed the embodiment of 'Roman' qualities, and perhaps his name is significant

I am more an antique Roman than a Dane.  
V, ii, 352.

#### (iv) Music, Games

Ophelia said that Hamlet was

The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye,  
tongue, sword.  
III, i, 159

and certainly courtliness, affectation and stateliness in speech, so marked even in the grave-digger's puns and word-play that Hamlet cries

the age is grown so picked that the toe  
of the peasant comes so near the heel of  
the courtier, he galls his kibe

V,1,151-3.

war, and books and learning are prominent in the imagery. Other aspects of the court atmosphere are reflected in imagery connected with music and games. There is much use of music in the play. According to Q2, in the council scene in the first act (I,11) the court enters and leaves to a "Flourish", and in state scenes throughout the play there are directions for music, notably when the court enters to see the play (III,11) preceded by trumpets and drums, and in the final scene, when again the entrance of the court is preceded by trumpets and drums. At the very end, when Hamlet is dead,

The soldiers' music and the rites of war  
Speak loudly for him V,11,410-1.

The music is martial and stately, trumpets and drums the instruments, and marches are called for three times, in the play-scene, and twice in the last scene, at the entrance of Fortinbras, and at the very end of the play. Warlike music is sometimes linked with the noise of guns

let the kettle to the trumpet speak,  
The trumpet to the cannoneer without,  
The cannons to the heavens ... V,11,286-8

The kettle-drum and trumpet thus bray on  
The triumph of his pledge. I, iv, 11

the great cannon to the clouds shall tell,  
And the king's rouse the heavens shall bruit  
again,  
Respeaking earthly thunder. I, ii, 126-8.

Martial music is fitting to the background of war in the play, but gentler forms are also present, in the songs sung by Ophelia and the gravedigger, the hautboys (Folio), or trumpets which accompany the dumb-show in the play-scene, the recorder which Hamlet has brought to him and uses as a concrete image of himself

'sblood, do you think I am easier to be  
played on than a pipe? III, ii, 386-7.

The small group of poetic images connected with music other than the "warlike noise" (V, ii, 360) of trumpets, drums and guns, is associated generally with Hamlet or Ophelia, whether it is they or other characters who speak the lines. It was Ophelia who

suck'd the honey of his music vows,  
Now see that noble and most sovereign reason,  
Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and  
harsh.  
III, i, 164-6

who died chanting "snatches of old tunes"

Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,  
Pull'd the poor wretch from her melodious lay  
To muddy death. IV, vii, 182-4



and for whom the priest refused to sing requiem  
(V,1,249). Other images are connected with Hamlet:

... confusion,  
Grating so harshly all his days of quiet  
III,1,2-3

blest are those ...  
That they are not a pipe for fortune's finger  
To sound what stop she please. III,11,73-8

My pulse, as yours, doth temperately keep time,  
And makes as healthful music. III,1v,140-1

has he and many more ... only got the tune  
of the time and outward habit of encounter  
V,11,196-9.

It is perhaps significant that apart from the grave-digger, Ophelia and Hamlet are the only characters who sing, or are connected directly with music, as in the vivid direct image of the recorder cited above. Hamlet himself invents or quotes snatches of verse, which should perhaps be sung; the reference may be to his own "One fair daughter and no more" when he refers Polonius to "the first row of the pious chanson" (II,11,438). Certainly it is appropriate that Hamlet's body should be carried out to music, and that Horatio's farewell is

Good night, sweet prince;  
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!  
V,11,370-1.

A small group of images and references relating

to games and sports also play their part in suggesting the court atmosphere. They also concern the action of the play, particularly those relating to hunting, which will be discussed together with images of spying. The conflict between Claudius and Hamlet appears on one level as a game in which each tries to outwit the other; it is for this purpose that Hamlet put on his "antic disposition", and he rejoices at being aware of treachery when he is sent to England

For 'tis the sport to have the engineer  
Hoist with his own petar. III,iv,206-7.

Claudius tries to find out Hamlet's intentions by employing Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to "draw him on to pleasures" (II,ii,15), and the "pastime" they wish for him (III,i,15) is provided by the players, whose entertainment turns out to be for Hamlet's advantage, not Claudius's,

they do but jest, poison in jest.  
III,ii,244.

This level of gaming in deadly intrigue is foreshadowed in II,i, where Polonius sends Reynaldo to spy on Laertes, and suggest such falsehoods as that he

There was a 'gaming; there o'ertook in 's rouse;  
There falling out at tennis. II,i,58-9

because by such means, "With windlasses and with  
assays of bias" (II,1,65) do politicians find  
information. It is in a bout of fencing, a courtly  
sport, that Hamlet dies; he had refused to kill the  
King at prayer, preferring to take him

At gaming, swearing, or about some act  
That has no relish of salvation in't  
III,111,91-2

and it is while carousing over a wager that Claudius  
dies. Occasionally images relating to games express  
the most serious thoughts of characters, as in  
Hamlet's onslaught on his mother

[an act that] makes marriage-vows  
As false as dicers' oaths. III,iv,40-5

What devil was't  
That thus hath cozen'd you at hoodman-blind?  
III,iv,76-7

and in reply to the complaint of Laertes about his  
dead father, "How came he dead? I'll not be juggled  
with" (IV,v,130), Claudius asks

is't writ in your revenge,  
That, sweep stake, you will draw both friend  
and foe,  
Winner and loser? IV,v,141-3.

### (v) Religion

There is a strongly-marked religious emphasis  
which contributes to the background of Hamlet, and  
enters into direct imagery in the appearance of the

ghost with its questionable nature;

I'll cross it, though it blast me.

I,1,127

says Horatio and speaks to it in an incantation, and when it vanishes the soldiers discuss the nature and powers of spirits

Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes  
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,  
The bird of dawning singeth all night long;  
And then, they say, no spirit dares stir abroad.

I,1,168-61.

Hamlet too doubts the nature of the ghost

Angels and ministers of grace defend us!  
Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damn'd ...

I,iv,39-40

The spirit that I have seen  
May be the devil; and the devil hath power  
To assume a pleasing shape. II,ii,627-9

It is a damned ghost that we have seen

III,ii,87.

Hamlet appears to Ophelia like a ghost or spirit

"loosed out of hell to speak of horrors" (II,1,83);

when Hamlet comes upon Ophelia reading, he seems to think she is praying

Nymph, in thy orisons  
Be all my sins remember'd. III,1,89-90

and when she speaks of love, he tells her "Get thee to a nunnery" (III,1,122ff.). Later on there is the scene where Claudius prays, or tries to pray, and the graveyard scene of the burial of Ophelia, whose body

is allowed burial in sanctified ground only by special permission. Image and reference extend the effect of this direct presentation throughout the play. There is not the continued violent contrast of heaven and hell which is present in Macbeth; it is notable that even Claudius, who recognises that in his treachery

with devotion's visage  
And pious action we do sugar o'er  
The devil himself. III.i,47-9

attempts to pray for forgiveness, and at one point, just before finding Claudius at prayer, Hamlet identifies himself with the forces of the devil

'Tis now the very witching time of night,  
When churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes  
Contagion to this world; now could I drink  
And do such bitter business as the day  
Would quake to look on. III.ii,406-10.

However, he cannot kill the praying Claudius, who might go to heaven, while Laertes and Claudius know no such restrictions in their plot on Hamlet's life:

Laertes: To cut his throat i'the church.

Claudius: No place, indeed, should murder sanctuarize.  
(IV.vii,127-8.

just as, earlier, Claudius had murdered his brother

Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin,  
Unhousel'd, disappointed, unanel'd ...  
I.v,76-7

and in his letter sent to England in the hands of

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern he ordered that the bearers be "put to sudden death Not shriving time allow'd (V,ii,46). This Christian background is ever present in the language, in poetic images such as

as this temple waxes  
The inward service of the mind and soul  
Grows wide withal. I,iii,12-14

Do not, as some ungracious pastors do,  
Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven  
I,iii,47-8

Whereto serves meray  
But to confront the visage of offence?  
III,iii,46-7

[such a deed as] sweet religion makes  
A rhapsody of words: heaven's face doth glow;  
Yea, this solidity and compound mass,  
With tristful visage as against the doom,  
Is thought-sick at the act. III,iv,47-51

That monster, custom, who all sense doth eat  
Of habits devil, is angel yet in this ...  
III,iv,161-2

1

and in other passages, as in the gravediggers' argument on the topic "is she to be buried in Christian burial that wilfully seeks her own salvation?" (V,i,1), their jokes about Adam, Hamlet's grim joke over the body of Polonius which cannot be found and brought "into the chapel" (IV,i,37) as the King has ordered,

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The last quoted passage is omitted from the Folio.



(vi) Water, Nature, Fire

A further aspect of the background to Hamlet, one which, as in the case of imagery relating to war and religion, affects the action of the play also, is provided in sea and water imagery. Those who escape from Elsinore, Laertes and Hamlet, both leave by water, and perhaps Ophelia's death by drowning is the more appropriate and meaningful in relation to other water imagery. In the opening scene we hear of the "impress of shipwrights" (I, i, 75) working all the week in Denmark, and Horatio is afraid that the ghost may lead Hamlet "toward the flood", or

to the dreadful summit of the cliff  
That beetles o'er his base into the sea.  
I, iv, 69-71.

Laertes is ready to sail in I, iii, "My necessities are embark'd (I, iii, 1), and other images establish this sea and water imagery, and extend it by linkage with other themes.

the moist star  
Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands ...  
I, i, 118-9

nor the fruitful river in the eye  
I, ii, 80  
O, that this too too solid flesh would melt,  
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew!  
I, ii, 129-30

And in the morn and liquid dew of youth  
I, iii, 41.



Thus although sea references are clustered in the scene where Laertes takes leave, and later on in the scenes when sailors bring Hamlet's letter to Horatio, and Hamlet himself reports the sea-battle, the water imagery is carried on in the language in other parts of the play. This is especially so in the last three acts, in such images as:

enterprises of great pitch and moment  
With this regard their currents turn awry  
III, i, 86-7

Full thirty times hath Phoebus' cart gone round  
Neptune's salt wash ...  
III, ii, 165-6

In the corrupted currents of this world  
III, iii, 57

That it is proof and bulwark against sense  
III, iv, 38

Mad as the sea and wind, when both contend  
Which is the mightier.  
IV, i, 7-8

The ocean, overpeering of his list,  
Eats not the flats with more impetuous haste ...  
IV, v, 99-100

love the general gender bear him;  
Who, dipping all his faults in their affection,  
Would, like the spring that turneth wood to stone,  
Convert his gyves to graces. IV, vii, 18-21

yet but yaw neither, in respect of his quick  
sail  
V, ii, 120.

---

In the first of these passages "pitch" is the Quarto reading; the Folio has "pith".

This imagery is continued in such passages as Hamlet's elaborate comparison of Rosencrantz to a sponge "that soaks up the king's countenance" (IV,11,12ff.), and in the bitter humour of the gravediggers' discussion of suicide by drowning (V,1,1ff.), and it is in the context of this imagery that Ophelia meets her death by drowning.

Ophelia's death is appropriate also in the context of the small amount of nature imagery in Hamlet, much of which is connected with her. Nearly all the references to flowers are connected with her or put into her mouth:

A violet in the youth of primy nature  
I,iii,7

The canker galls the infants of the spring  
Too oft before their buttons be disclosed  
I,iii,39-40

Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads  
I,iii,50

The expectancy and rose of the fair state  
III,i,160

O Rose of May!  
IV,v,157

from her fair and unpolluted flesh  
May violets spring!  
V,1,262-3

and in her madness she distributes flowers, and goes to her death covered "with fantastic garlands"

Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies and long  
purples  
IV,vii,170.

This association with flowers, suggests beauty and innocence in the "unweeded garden" that is Denmark, and Ophelia's death at the hands, as it were, of nature is thus appropriate, and perhaps symbolical of her chastity, which is compared by Hamlet in stock fashion to ice and snow (III,1,140), for water is clean and pure,

Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens  
To wash it white as snow? III,111,45-6.

Her death by water also perhaps symbolises her coldness and loss of love in contrast to the fire and star imagery which indicates the passion and violence of other characters, as in Laertes' brief speech when he learns of her death

Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia,  
And therefore I forbid my tears: but yet ...  
The woman will be out. Adieu, my Lord:  
I have a speech of fire, that fain would blaze,  
But that this folly douts it. IV,vii,186-92.

This hotness or fieriness is connected with other characters, Fortinbras, of "unimproved mettle hot and full" (I,1,96), with the youth of Laertes, "The flash and outbreak of a fiery mind" (II,1,33), and his skill at fencing which will like a star, "Stick fiery off indeed" (V,11,268), with the Ghost, "confined to fast in fires" (I,v,11), with the anger and fear of Claudius, the lust of Gertrude, the madness of

Hamlet:

your grace hath screen'd and stood between  
Much heat and him. III, iv, 3-4

What, frightened with false fire!  
III, ii, 277

To flaming youth let virtue be as wax,  
And melt in her own fire; proclaim no shame..  
When the compulsive ardour gives the charge,  
Since frost itself as actively doth burn  
And reason panders will III, iv, 84-8

Upon the heat and flame of thy distemper  
Sprinkle cool patience. III, iv, 123-4.

Fire is also associated with love, as Polonius sees Hamlet's "hot love on the wing" (II, ii, 131), but only after he had refused to believe that it was true fire, advising Ophelia to ignore "these blazes... Giving more light than heat" (I, iii, 117-8), and in Hamlet's love poem to Ophelia, "Doubt thou the stars are fire" (II, ii, 116); Laertes' passion for his father will be soothed with time, says Claudius,

Time qualifies the spark and fire of it  
IV, vii, 114

and so the passion of these characters is symbolised in terms of fire and the stars. Ophelia, however, is told that Hamlet is a prince, "out of thy star" (II, ii, 141), and as Hamlet is "too much i'the sun" (I, ii, 67) perhaps in the sense of passion, Ophelia is not allowed to "walk i'the sun" (II, ii, 185) for fear that Hamlet may "wreck" her (II, i, 113). Ophelia in

her madness refers to water and snow, "mountain snow" (IV.v,35), "With true-love showers" (IV.v,39), "lay him i'the cold ground" (IV.v,69), "rain'd many a tear" (IV.v,166), "white as snow" (IV.v,195); while other characters are passionate and hot, Ophelia is cold, and seems in her death by water to be indeed

a creature native and indued  
Unto that element IV.vii,180-1.

## II "We are Arrant Knaves All": Deceit and Corruption

### (vii) Play-Acting

The courtly mode of diction adopted by characters in public or in the presence of the court is artificial. To courtiers such as Polonius, Osric, and perhaps Laertes, it is more or less habitual, but Claudius, Hamlet, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern speak differently when in private, to their friends or in soliloquy. This artificiality, as noted earlier, may act as a screen behind which the truth may be hidden. As Polonius observes

'Tis too much proved that with devotion's visage  
And pious action we do sugar o'er  
The devil himself. III,1,47-9

and Claudius, recognising the application of these words to himself, follows with an aside,



connected with this 'play-acting' on the part of characters. Hamlet breaks down the barrier between himself and Ophelia in this nunnery scene, and that between himself and Gertrude in the closet scene, but breaks down the King's acting ironically enough by means of the play within the play. The players symbolise the state of affairs at court, where acting is necessary, and in their dumbshow provide a vivid direct image of the reality-murder and corruption -<sup>1</sup> behind the acting. Hamlet in particular has several images indicating awareness of the way he and other characters are continually acting. The shows of grief mean nothing, he compares himself to an actor, uses the double-edged greeting to the players, "He that plays the king shall be welcome" (II,ii,332), and is ready to match the ranting of Laertes,

For they are actions which a man might play:  
But I have that within which passeth show.  
I,ii,84-5

What would he do,  
Had he the motive and the cue for passion  
That I have? He would drown the stage with tears  
II,ii,586ff.

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<sup>1</sup> The dumb-show is unusual in its representation of a real event; most dumb-shows in Elizabethan drama are allegorical; other examples of dumb-shows representing real events may however be found, of. the opening of The Weakest Goeth to the Wall (1600).

Nay, an thou'lt mouth,  
I'll rant as well as thou  
V,1,306-7

Ere I could make a prologue to my brains,  
They had begun the play  
V,11,30-1

You that look pale and tremble at this chance,  
That are but mates or audience to this act ...  
V,11,345-6.

Hamlet even puts on a little show for Horatio, and asks, "Would not this ... get me a fellowship in a cry of players, sir?" (III,11,285). Hamlet's advice to the players may perhaps be seen in relation to this imagery. Gertrude finds each incident "prologue to some great amiss" (IV,v,18), Claudius is afraid that their real purpose will show through the "bad performance" (IV,vii,152) of the duel he and Laertes stage, and Polonius boasts of his acting ability, "I did enact Julius Caesar" (III,11,108).

Play-acting and artificiality are means of concealment, and stateliness and formality thus have another function besides creating the court atmosphere. For these are features which at the same time conceal from characters, and reveal to audience or reader, the treachery and corruption underneath. Various groups of dramatic images reveal or extend both the loneliness and sense of confinement of characters hiding behind a false appearance, and the treachery and decay in the Danish court.





How dangerous is it that this man goes loose!  
Yet must not we put the strong law on him.  
IV,iii,2-3

Ironically enough, on the only occasion when Hamlet escapes from Denmark and from the sight of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, he falls into the hands of pirates and becomes "their prisoner" (IV,vi,20). Confined in these ways, there is especial irony in remarks such as that Hamlet makes to Claudius concerning the play within the play, "we that have free souls, it touches us not" (III,ii,258), or Rosencrantz' advice to Hamlet

You do, surely, bar the door upon your own  
liberty, if you deny your griefs to your  
friend.  
III,ii,351-3

and both Ophelia and Polonius would perhaps have been safer had Hamlet's advice been taken, that the former should go to a nunnery, and regarding Polonius

Let the doors be shut upon him, that he may  
play the fool nowhere but in's own house  
III,i,135-7.

In the last scene, as Hamlet is about to die, the whole court is as it were imprisoned when, recognising treachery, Hamlet cries, "let the door be lock'd" (V,ii,322), and if such an action were carried out, it would provide a direct image giving force to the poetic imagery and reference. Hamlet dies, shuffles off his "mortal coil", giving a new beauty to an old image

as this fell sergeant, death,  
Is strict in his arrest  
V,ii,347-8.

Prison imagery is connected with other references to law and guilt; the law in Denmark shares in the atmosphere of corruption; Fortinbras broke a "seal'd compact, Well ratified by law" (I,1,86), Hamlet speaks of the "law's delay" (III,1,72), and the coroner twists the law so that Ophelia may be given Christian burial (V,1,11f.). To Hamlet as he ponders on a skull, "why may not that be the skull of a lawyer?" (V,1,107), a lawyer is a man of wealth, a "great buyer of land", and Claudius, who has cheated the law by the most terrible of crimes, recognizes that

In the corrupted currents of this world  
Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice,  
And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself  
Buys out the law: but 'tis not so above;  
There is no shuffling, there the action lies  
In his true nature; and we ourselves compell'd  
Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults,  
To give in evidence. III,111,57-64.

### (ix) Spying

The prison-like atmosphere of the court is emphasized in the spying, watching and intrigue which pervade the play. Hamlet is constantly watched by the King and his spies, having obeyed the request of Claudius that he remain

Here, in the cheer and comfort of our eye  
I,11,116

and as Claudius spies upon and plots against Hamlet,  
so Hamlet spies on Claudius in the play-scene, and  
counter-plots

O, 'tis most sweet,  
When in one line two crafts directly meet.  
III, iv, 209-10

The opening scene presents a group of men  
on watch against some danger the nature of which  
they do not know until Horatio explains, (I, i, 71ff.);  
the words "watch" (eleven times), "eye" (ten times),  
and other words connected with seeing echo through  
the first two scenes, and what is to be one of the  
most prominent features of the play's action is thus  
suggested through word and image:

With us to watch the minutes of this night.  
I, i, 27

Why this same strict and most observant watch  
So nightly toils the subject of the land  
I, i, 71-2

Without the sensible and true avouch  
Of mine own eyes. I, i, 57-8

A mote it is to trouble the mind's eye.  
I, i, 112

With an auspicious and a dropping eye  
I, ii, 11

let thine eye look like a friend on  
Denmark.

Do not for ever with thy veiled lids  
Seek for thy noble father in the dust.  
I, ii, 69-71

methinks I see my father.  
O where, my lord?  
In my mind's eye, Horatio.  
I, ii, 184-5

upon the platform where we watch'd  
I, ii, 213

I shall the effect of this good lesson keep,  
As watchman to my heart.  
I, iii, 45

Cladius and Polonius hide so that "seeing unseen" (III, i, 33) they may spy on Hamlet (III, i and III, iv), and employ Ophelia as a decoy; Hamlet and Horatio watch Cladius during the play-scene.

For I mine eyes will rivet to his face  
III, ii, 90

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are set to watch Hamlet, almost as his jailors, and accompany him on the one occasion on which he leaves Denmark. The only other major character who leaves the court is Laertes, and a spy, Reynaldo, is sent to watch him (II, i). So in more senses than one is Hamlet the "observed of all observers" (III, i, 162); spying and deceit run through the play's action, and imagery and words connected with the direct images of spying and watching extend their influence throughout the play. The question whether what is seen is the reality or merely a deceptive appearance is continually involved with this spying. Polonius reaches the wrong conclusion

in spite of his keenness in looking into Ophelia's love for Hamlet:

If I had play'd the desk or table-book,  
Or given my heart a winking, mute and dumb,  
Or look'd upon this love with idle sight;  
What might you think? II,ii,136-9

In spite of Claudius's care to avoid trouble from the multitude "who like not in their judgement, but their eyes" (IV,iii,4), and to make sure that in his plot with Laertes there is no slip so that "our drift look through our bad performance" (IV,vii,152), his plans fail. Hamlet endeavours to strip off false appearances and see the reality; he employs the players who "hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature ... show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image" (III,ii,24-6), to present in show what has really happened, and in the terrible scenes with Ophelia and his mother, his aim is similar. The scene with Ophelia

I have heard of your paintings... God has  
given you one face, and you make yourselves  
another... III,i,148-50

is poignant because Hamlet is mistaken; it is in the closet scene, where his anger is justified, that the imagery connected with sight and deceit reaches a climax:

You go not till I set you up a glass  
Where you may see the inmost part of you  
III,iv,19-20

Look here, upon this picture, and on this  
III, iv, 53

Have you eyes?  
Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed,  
And batten on this moor? Ha! have you eyes?  
III, iv, 65-7

What devil was't  
That thus hath cozen'd you at hoodman blind?  
Eyes without feeling, feeling without sight ...  
III, iv, 76-8

Then turn'st mine eyes into my very soul...  
III, iv, 89

Images and words connected with watching and sight, together with the direct image of men on watch, set the atmosphere in the opening scenes for the continual spying in the play, and appear in other scenes not directly connected with spying in the action, notably the closet scene, to point the confusion between the shows of things and things as they are. The closet scene is particularly interesting, for while Hamlet so bitterly presents the true picture of Claudius and of his mother, the ghost appears to him alone, and is unseen by Gertrude; is it that the ghost is only a show, or is it that Gertrude is unable to perceive reality, in spite of her claim,

Hamlet: Do you see nothing there?

Queen: Nothing at all; yet all that is I see.  
III, iv, 131-2

(x) Hunting

One aspect of the plotting and counterplotting and continual spying is reflected in imagery connected with games; images of hunting also help to extend and intensify this feature of the action. Hamlet thinks of himself as hunted by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern,

Why do you go about to recover the wind  
of me, as if you would drive me into a  
toll? III,ii,361-2

and by Claudius, who has "Thrown out his angle for my proper life" (V,ii,66), and also of himself as hunter

Hillo, ho, ho, boy! come, bird, come.  
I,v,116

I know a hawk from a handsaw II,ii,397

We'll e'en to't like French falconers,  
fly at anything we see. II,ii,449-50

But I am pigeon-liver'd and lack gall  
To make oppression bitter, or ere this  
I should have fatted all the region kites  
With this slave's offal. II,ii,604-7

let the stricken deer go weep  
The hart ungalled play III,ii,282-3

The play Hamlet calls the "Mouse-trap" (III,ii,247), and he kills Polonius as a rat. Trapping, snaring, hunting enter into the language of other characters; Polonius "hunts ... the trail of policy" (II,ii,47) less well than he thinks; Laertes falls into his own snare, "as a woodcock to mine own springe" (V,ii,317);



Rosenorantz and Guildenstern "cote" the players, that is outstrip them, and presumably cause them to stay at Elsinore, and Claudius says of the Danish rabble

How cheerfully on the false trail they cry!  
O, this is counter, you false Danish dogs!  
IV.v,109-10

Hunting, hawking and fishing, "Your bait of falsehood takes this carp of truth" (II,1,63), are all referred to, and link with other images of birds, "hot love on the wing" (II,11,132), "secrecy .. moult no feather" (II,11,306), "an eyrie of children, little eyases" (II,11,354), of dogs and horses, "with a larger tether may he walk" (I,111,125), "no sequel at the heels of this mother's admiration" (III,11,341), "occulted guilt Do not itself unkennel" (III,11,85), and of fish, "if like a crab you could go backwards" (II,11,206), "A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king" (IV,111,28). It is thus appropriate that when Fortinbras enters the final scene of carnage, he should speak of it as the death of a hunted animal, "This quarry cries on havoc" (V,11,375). This group of hunting images thus extends and intensifies the sense of plotting and intrigue in the play, springs from and gives added strength to one aspect of the action.

(xi) Corruption: Poison

Spying, deceit, treachery, the sense of being in prison, of being hunted, are all part of, or spring directly from the action of Hamlet, and suggest the corruption in the Danish court. Another element in the action which helps to create this atmosphere is the use of poison.<sup>1</sup> Not only does the ghost of Hamlet's father describe his poisoning in detail, but the scene is depicted in mime in the play-scene. In the final scene it is the poisoned sword which kills Laertes, Hamlet and Claudius, and Gertrude drinks poison. Even Ophelia's madness is called "the poison of deep grief" (W,v,76). The poisoning of Hamlet's father is described as something loathsome; the "leperous distilment" (I,v,64) poured in his ears produces a skin eruption

a most instant tetter bark'd about,  
Most lazar-like, with vile and loathsome crust,  
All my smooth body. I,v,71-3

The poison Laertes provides is an "unction" so potent that no poultice can save the creature whose blood is

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<sup>1</sup> Miss Spurgeon's view that sickness imagery is dominant in the play (Shakespeare's Imagery, pp.316-8), has been generally accepted. W. Clemen has examined in more detail what he calls the 'leitmotiv' of corruption.

infected by it; it is a "contagion" (IV.vii.148), a word used elsewhere by Hamlet.

hell itself breathes out  
Contagion to this world. III.11.407-8

In the play scene the poison Iocianus uses is a

mixture rank, of midnight weeds collected,  
With Hecate's ban thrice blasted, thrice  
infected  
III, 11, 268-9.

Thus through the imagery poison is connected with disease, foulness, corruption, and various groups of images extend and amplify this sense of corruption. The words of Marcellus

Something is rotten in the state of Denmark  
I.iv.90

have ramifications in many directions.

(a) Sickness

One aspect of this corruption is presented through images and references connected with sickness.

Francisco sets the note in the first few lines, "I am sick at heart" (I,i,8), and this sickness extends to the whole state. Hamlet says "The time is out of joint" (I,v,188), and Fortinbras is nearer the truth than Claudius imagines in

thinking by our late dear brother's death  
Our state to be disjoint and out of frame  
I, 11, 19-20

**Hamlet's pretended madness is a disease, a derangement**

of the ordered body and mind,

The head and source of all your son's distemper  
II,11,55

Whether aught, to us unknown, afflicts him thus,  
That, open'd, lies within our remedy.  
II,11,17-18

That unmatched form and feature of blown youth  
Blasted with ecstasy.  
III,1,167-8

I cannot ... Make you a wholesome answer;  
my with diseased ...  
III,11,331-4

The King's anger is a disease; he retires after the  
play "marvellous distempered" with choler, and Hamlet  
tells Guildenstern

Your wisdom should show itself more richer  
to signify this to his doctor; for, for me  
to put him to his purgation would perhaps  
plunge him into far more choler.  
III,11,316-9

and Laertes' grief is a "sickness of the heart"  
(IV,vii,56). Even the people become "thick and  
unwholesome in their thoughts" (IV,v,82), and Laertes  
"wants not buzzers to infect his ear With pestilent  
speeches" (IV,v,90). So sickness extends throughout  
the state, and indeed to Hamlet the heavens appear  
nothing more than a "foul and pestilent congregation  
of vapours" (II,11,314).

Poetic images extend the applications of this  
sickness inwards as well as outwards, to express the  
fear of Claudius, to whom Hamlet becomes a disease,

like the owner of a foul disease,  
To keep it from divulging, let it feed  
Even on the pith of life. IV,1,21-3

For like the heetic in my blood he rages,  
And thou must cure me. IV,111,68-9

and to express the guilt and sin of both Claudius and Gertrude; Claudius attempts to pray and Hamlet refuses to kill him "in the purging of his soul" (III,111,85), for in any case praying is of little avail,

This physic but prolongs thy sickly days.  
III,111,96

Gertrude realises her own guilt after her interview with Hamlet, and grows fearful,

To my sick soul, as sin's true nature is,  
Each toy seems prologue to some great amiss.  
IV,v,17-18

It is only in the third act that sickness imagery begins to take on this significance, only after the guilt of Claudius is established in the play-scene, and once again the closet scene provides a climax, for it is the marked iteration in this scene, forming a strong local pattern, which establishes the inward reference of sickness images. Gertrude's act in marrying Claudius was one that

takes off the rose  
From the fair forehead of an innocent love  
And sets a blister there. III,iv,42-4

Claudius is a "mildew'd ear. Blasting his wholesome brother" (III,iv,64), and her "sense" must have been "apoplex'd" (III,iv,72) to choose him, for "but a sickly part of one true sense" (III,iv,80) could not have done so. Hamlet reveals to her "the black and grained spots" (III,iv,90) in her soul, and warns her against thinking him mad,

Lay not that flattering unction to your soul,  
That not your trespass, but my madness speaks;  
It will but skin and film the ulcerous place,  
Whilst rank corruption, mining all within,  
Infects unseen. III,iv,145-9.

Indeed the whole universe "is thought-sick at the act" (III,iv,51) of her marrying Claudius. Thus the poetic images and references, springing from the use of poisoning, and the "diseased wit" which afflicts Hamlet, extend sickness throughout the whole state, and in the closet scene a marked local group of images adds a new significance, indicating the guilt and sin of Gertrude and Claudius, a significance caught up at other points in the last acts.

### (b) Sex

A small group of images relating to sex, mostly its unpleasant aspects, also plays a part in establishing the atmosphere of corruption. These too spring from the plot, from the incestuous marriage of

Gertrude and the apparent unfaithfulness of Ophelia to Hamlet. Gertrude has made the "royal bed of Denmark" into

A couch for luxury and damned incest  
I,v,83

As Hamlet reminds her in the closet scene, she lives

In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed  
Stew'd in corruption, honeying and making love  
Over the nasty sty III,iv,92-4

where the "bloat king" pinches her "wanton" on the cheek and gives her "reechy kisses" (III,iv,182-4).

Their relationship is one of "shameful lust" (I,v,45ff.)

Polonius casts a similar smirch on Hamlet, telling Ophelia not to believe his vows for they are

mere implorators of unholy suits  
Breathing like sanctified and pious bawds  
I,iii,129-30

and allows Reynaldo to suggest that Laertes is "open to incontinency", and goes "drabbing" (II,1,30ff.), that

I saw him enter such a house of sale,  
Videlicet, a brothel, or so forth,  
II,1,60-1

so that it is appropriate that Hamlet should treat him as a bawd, "you are a fishmonger... Have you a daughter?... Let her not walk i'the sun: conception is a blessing, but not as your daughter may conceive"

(II,ii,174ff.). Hamlet compares himself to a whore (II,ii,614), and Laertes, in a passion over the death of his father says

**That drop of blood that's calm proclaims me  
  bastard,  
Cries cuckold to my father, brands the harlot  
Even here, between the chaste unsmirched brow  
Of my true mother.**

**IV,v,117-20**

Claudius compares his "painted word" to

The harlot's cheek, beautied with plastering  
art  
III, 1, 51

and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern live about the "secret parts" of the strumpet Fortune" (II,ii,239), so that in a sense sexual debauchery touches all these characters. The most poignant use of this imagery is in connection with Ophelia, whom Hamlet treats as a prostitute in the nunnery scene.

I have heard of your paintings too, well enough; God has given you one face, and you make yourselves another: you jig, you amble, and you lisp .. and make your wantonness your ignorance. III, i, 148-52

and perhaps again in the play-scene, "Lady, shall I lie in your lap?" (III, ii, 119). The love songs she sings in her madness are the more touching because of Hamlet's treatment of her.

(c) Food and Drink

**Images connected with food and drink also reveal**



aspects of the decay and corruption in Denmark.

Gertrude, who would hang on Hamlet's father

As if increase of appetite had grown  
By what it fed on. I,11,144-5

marries Claudius, a man who spends his time in

"heavy-headed revel" (I,iv,17), a drunkard (III,111,89);

Hamlet cannot understand how she could

on this fair mountain leave to feed,  
And batten on this moor. III,iv,66-7

These lines contrast strangely with the flattering reference of Rosenorantz to "those many bodies .. That live and feed upon your majesty" (III,111,9). The unpleasant suggestions of Hamlet's words appear in other food images and references,

let the candied tongue lick absurd pomp  
III,11,65

I eat the air, promise-cramm'd; you cannot  
feed capons so. III,11,99

He took my father grossly, full of bread  
III,111,80

That monster, custom, who all sense doth eat  
III,iv,161

King: Where's Polonius?

Hamlet: At supper.

King: At supper! where?

Hamlet: Not where he eats, but where he is eaten ...  
IV,111,17ff.

What is a man,  
If his chief good and market of his time  
Be but to sleep and feed? IV,iv,33-5

Lust will "prey on garbage" (I,v,65), and to Claudius Hamlet is a disease which he has allowed to "feed Even on the pith of life" (IV,i,28). This food imagery culminates in the final scene, when Fortinbras, who had

Shark'd up a list of landless resolute,  
For food and diet, to some enterprise  
That hath a stomach in't I,i,98-100

returns from his venture in Poland to find Hamlet, Claudius, Laertes and Gertrude all dead, and has the fine lines

O proud death,  
What feast is toward in thine eternal cell,  
That thou so many Princes at a shot  
So bloodily hast struck? V,ii,375-8

#### (d) Money

The use of money in the play also has some bearing on the sense of corruption in Denmark. While the other young nobles, Laertes and Fortinbras have money and opportunity to use it,

Give him this money and these notes, Reynaldo  
II,i,1

old Norway, overcome with joy,  
Gives him three thousand crowns in annual fee  
II,ii,72-3

Hamlet suggests that he is denied money

Beggar that I am, I am even poor in thanks ...  
my thanks are too dear a halfpenny.

II,ii,280-3

And what so poor a man as Hamlet is  
May do, to express his love and friending to  
God willing, shall not lack. I,v,185-7<sup>you,</sup>

Hamlet is indeed a beggar, ousted from his inheritance,  
and the theme recurs, as where Hamlet speaks of the  
death of Polonius, "your fat king and your lean beggar"  
(IV,iii,24) are levelled in death, and again in the  
graveyard scene, where for all his wealth and his  
purchases the "great buyer of land" (V,i,112) is just  
another set of bones. Not only is Hamlet denied his  
inheritance by a King who is a thief

a vice of kings;  
A outpurse of the empire and the rule,  
That from a shelf the precious diadem stole,  
And put it in his pocket. III,iv,98-101

If he steal aught the whilst this play is  
playing  
And 'scape detecting, I will pay the theft.  
III,ii,93-4

but the courtiers are corrupt, spy on Hamlet for  
Claudius, men like Rosencrantz, who "soaks up the  
king's countenance, his rewards, his authorities"  
(IV,ii,16), or affected fools like Osric,

His purse is empty already; all's golden  
words are spent. V,ii,136

Indeed the age is one of too much money, and this in

itself is a corrupting influence:

For in the fatness of these puray times  
Virtue itself of vice must pardon beg  
III, iv, 153-4

Two thousand souls and twenty thousand ducats  
Will not debate the question of this straw;  
This is the imposthume of much wealth and peace  
IV, iv, 25-7

Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice,  
And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself  
Buys out the law. III, iii, 58-60

There are many references to money elsewhere in Hamlet, notably in I, iii, where Polonius gives his famous advice to Laertes to wear costly dress, not to lend or borrow, or "dull thy palm with entertainment" (I, iii, 64) of new friends, and follows this with warnings to Ophelia not to take Hamlet's "tenders for true pay" (I, iii, 106), for the soul is prodigal in lending the tongue vows (I, iii, 116), and

in few, Ophelia,  
Do not believe his vows; for they are brokers,  
Not of that dye which their investments show.  
I, iii, 126-8

The strong local pattern in this scene prepares for later images. It is in terms of money that the Ghost and later Hamlet think of relationship to heaven

No reckoning made, but sent to my account  
With all my imperfections on my head.  
I, v, 78-9

O, this is hire and salary, not revenge ...  
And how his audit stands who knows save heaven?  
III, iii, 79-82

Monetary values are the mark of a thing's worth in Denmark, and image and reference suggest this throughout the play

those that would make mows at him while  
my father lived, give twenty, forty,  
fifty, a hundred ducats a-piece for his  
picture in little. II,ii,381-4

#### (v) Dirt and Weeds

On the lowest and in some ways most vivid level the sense of corruption, moral and physical, revealed in image, reference and action connected with poison, sickness, sex, food and money, is expressed in terms of dirt, weeds and filth. The ghost tells Hamlet to seek revenge, for

duller shouldst thou be than the fat weed  
That roots itself in ease on Lethe wharf,  
Wouldst thou not stir in this I,v,32-4

and Hamlet's inaction makes him think of himself as a "dull and muddied-mettled rascal" (II,ii,594). Polonius does not object to "slight sullies" being laid on Laertes,

As 'twere a thing a little soil'd i'the working  
II,i,40

The relationship of Claudius and Gertrude is foul; lust will "prey on garbage" (I,v,57), and they live

In the rank sweat of an enswamed bed,  
Stew'd in corruption, honeying and making love  
Over the nasty sty. III, iv, 92-4

Hamlet says to his mother

do not spread the compost on the weeds,  
To make them ranker. III, iv, 151-2

Claudius recognises that his offence "is rank, it smells to heaven" (III, iii, 36). Even the people grow "maddied, Thick and unwholesome in their thoughts" (IV, v, 81), and in the play-scene it is with a "mixture rank, of midnight weeds collected" (III, ii, 268) that Lucianus poisons the Player-King. Oseio is a "chough", his only accomplishment being that he is "spacious in the possession of dirt" (V, ii, 90). So suggestions of being soiled, like suggestions of sexual incontinence, smirch many characters in some sense or other, and spread still further, for the excessive revelry at the Danish court

Makes us traduced and tax'd of other nations:  
They clepe us drunkards, and with swinish phrase  
Soil our addition. I, iv, 18-20

and to Hamlet the whole world is "an unweeded garden", full of "things rank and gross in nature" (I, ii, 135-6), a "sterile promontory" (II, ii, 310), and man, "this quintessence of dust" (II, ii, 321), means nothing to him. It is in the context of this imagery of corruption that some of Hamlet's words in his interviews with Polonius

and Ophelia have their evocative quality

For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog,  
being a god kissing carrion ... II,ii,161-2

What should such fellows as I do crawling  
between heaven and earth? We are arrant  
knaves, all. III,i,129-31

and connected with it are Hamlet's remarks on death  
and suicide, and his cynical words about the dead  
Polonius,

Your worm is your only emperor for diet: we  
fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat  
ourselves for maggots ... IV,iii,22-4

All this imagery culminates in the graveyard scene,  
which presents a vivid direct image of dirt and decay,  
in the digging and in the skulls on which Hamlet  
ponders. One might have been the "pate of a  
politician, ... one that would circumvent God"  
(V,i,86), another that of a lawyer, a "great buyer  
of land", another is that of Yorick, the old King's  
jester, and Hamlet muses further on the "noble dust"  
(V,i,225) of Alexander and Caesar, and so the skulls  
and the dust of the graveyard connect with other themes  
in the imagery, courtliness, law, money, war, and remind  
also of the part played by Polonius the politician and  
Hamlet the mocker. Finally Laertes and Hamlet wrestle  
in the dust of Ophelia's grave, she who was pulled "to

muddy death" (IV.vii,184). The skulls and bones of this scene symbolise death the leveller, and gather associations from previous imagery so that they are emblematic of the fact that "something is rotten in the state of Denmark" (I.iv,90). Thus there is a special significance in lines such as the gravedigger's reply to Hamlet's

How long will a man lie i'the earth ere he rot?

I'faith, if he be not rotten before he die -  
as we have many pocky corpses now-a-days, that  
will scarce hold the laying in ...

V.1,178-82

The living are corrupt and diseased in Denmark.

### Conclusion

Several passages have been cited more than once under different headings, and many more might have been; the two opposed aspects of the play which have been used as headings under which to discuss its dramatic imagery fuse in the overall picture, and, as in Macbeth, are brought together in many of the most vivid poetic and direct images. Thus the play-scene shows in the speech of the players an extreme form of courtly diction and rhetoric, yet all their speech and action, like those of the court are but shows, and are instruments whereby Hamlet is enabled to deceive



and to spy on Claudius. The players are central both in the creation of the stately atmosphere of the court, and in the spying and deceit which exists within the courtly atmosphere; the reality, the secret of the murder breaks through the show of things, the "poison in jest". Likewise in the graveyard scene this dual aspect of the play is present, suggestions of courtly grace and the foulness that may be present nevertheless; Yorick has become but a skull in a graveyard:

Now, get you to my lady's chamber, and tell  
her, let her paint an inch thick, to this  
favour she must come V.i,212-4

The various aspects of the play's imagery are linked also in many poetic images or sequences of images, as in the great soliloquies

O, that this too too solid flesh would melt  
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew!  
Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd  
His canon against self-slaughter! O God! God!  
How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable  
Seem to me all the uses of this world!  
Fie on't! ah fie! 'tis an unweeded garden,  
That grows to seed; things rank and gross in  
nature  
Possess it merely ... I,ii,129ff.

Here images connected with water, with religion, with decay and weeds are linked, and in "canon" there is perhaps an echo of war. The whole soliloquy is concerned with suicide, the death-wish and incest,

the sexual aspect of the corruption, so vividly caught up in the graveyard scene later. There is a similar concentration of imagery in the passionate speeches of Hamlet to his mother in the closet scene (III, iv), in the soliloquies and private speeches of Claudius, and at many other points in the play. The object-matter of one image reappears as the subject-matter of another, or in reference, and all may be reflected again in direct images. Often in a single phrase two or more image patterns may be represented.

Or to take arms against a sea of troubles  
III, i, 59

The ocean, overpeering of his list,  
Eats not the flats with more impetuous haste  
IV, v, 99-100.

The rich suggestiveness of the dramatic imagery thus arises from a constant interplay of themes firmly based in a dramatic context; it helps to create, and the study of it may help to elucidate something of Hamlet's mystery.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **The Dramatic Imagery of 'Julius Caesar'**

JULIUS CAESAR

Julius Caesar has been neglected on the whole by students of Shakespeare's poetic imagery, as a play bare in style. Caroline Spurgeon found only 83 poetic images and no leading image in it, fewer than in any other play except the very much shorter Comedy of Errors, and had little to say of it except to note "a certain persistence in the comparison of the characters to animals".<sup>1</sup> Marion Smith found only 65 images in the play, and was inclined to attribute the last two acts to an author other than Shakespeare,<sup>2</sup> on account of their extreme bareness. F. E. Halliday called Julius Caesar "comparatively cold, colourless and formal".<sup>3</sup> These estimates seem to be the result of analysing the poetic imagery or style of Julius Caesar as aspects detachable from the rest of the play, and unrelated to action or dramatic purpose, and perhaps reveal more clearly

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<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare's Imagery, pp.346-7, 361.

<sup>2</sup> Marlowe's Imagery and the Marlowe Canon, pp.189-91.

<sup>3</sup> Shakespeare and his Critics, p.137.

than in the case of most of Shakespeare's other plays, the limitations of studying only poetic imagery or aspects of style in isolation from the play as a whole. However, an examination of the play's dramatic imagery suggests a very different estimate of the play, and points to some sources of its power and effectiveness on the stage.

### (1) Formality and Names

In some respects Julius Caesar is similar to Hamlet. Analogies may be found between the characters of Hamlet and Brutus, and the plays have other links,<sup>1</sup> but perhaps the most notable feature they have in common is a conscious display of rhetoric, and much speech that has a formal or 'public' quality. This is more marked and more sustained in Julius Caesar, in which the central scenes are occupied with the murder of Caesar in

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Hamlet contains several references to the story of Julius Caesar; both plays contain a ghost; sometimes a phrase or image occurring in Julius Caesar seems to be caught up again in the later play, and, for instance, Brutus's remark

when every drop of blood  
That every Roman bears, and nobly bears,  
Is guilty of a several bastardy II.i.136-8  
may have suggested Laertes' line  
That drop of blood that's calm proclaims me  
bastard IV.v.117.

public, followed by the public orations of Brutus and Antony. Both speeches are marked by parallelism of phrasing, iteration, rhetorical questions, and other rhetorical devices, and as the players' speeches in Hamlet seem to represent an extreme form of the public rhetoric of the courtiers, so these speeches of Brutus and Antony show exaggerated forms of the rhetorical expression found elsewhere in the play. Thus it is that these speeches stand out from the context and yet are harmonious with it. Repetition, as of the words "Brutus is an honourable man" (III,ii,87ff.), occurs elsewhere, in Portia's plea to Brutus,

I grant I am a woman; but withal  
A woman that Lord Brutus took to wife:  
I grant I am a woman; but withal ...  
II,i,292-4

in the repetition of the Soothsayer's "Beware the Ides of March" (I,ii,18ff.), in Cassius' repeated "Therein, ye Gods, you ..." (I,iii,91ff.), in Brutus's "I did send to you For certain sums of gold ... I did send to you For gold" (IV,iii,69ff.), and in other contexts. There are many examples of parallel phrasing in the play, though nowhere so concentrated as in the funeral speeches; indeed,

earlier in the same scene, in the message Antony's  
servant delivers,

Brutus is noble, wise, valiant, and honest;  
Caesar was mighty, bold, royal and loving;  
Say I love Brutus, and I honour him;  
Say I fear'd Caesar, honour'd him and loved him.  
III,1,126-9

and in the speech Antony makes when he enters to the  
conspirators,

Here did'st thou fall; and here thy hunters  
stand,  
Sign'd in thy spoil, and crimson'd in thy lethe  
III,1,205-6

the parallelism of the orations is foreshadowed.  
Formal apostrophes such as Antony's "O Judgment!  
thou art fled to brutish beasts" (III,11,109),  
occur at many other points in the play, as these  
examples indicate:

Age, thou art shamed!  
Rome, thou hast lost the breed of noble bloods!  
I,11,150-1

O conspiracy,  
Shamest thou to show thy dangerous brow by  
night ...?  
II,1,77-8

O constancy, be strong upon my side!  
II,iv,6

O world, thou wast the forest to this hart  
III,1,208

O murderous slumber,  
Lay'st thou thy leaden mace ...?  
IV,111,26-7

O hateful error, melancholy's child ...  
V,111,69

There are also several examples of laboured or formal comparisons, such as Antony's description of Lepidus bearing slanders "as the ass bears gold" (IV,1,21ff.), and Brutus's simile in the next scene,

hollow men, like horses hot at hand,  
Make gallant show and promise of their mettle;  
But when they should endure the bloody spur,  
They fall their crests, and, like deceitful  
Sink in the trial. jades,  
IV,11,23-7

In addition to these formal or rhetorical elements there are, as in Hamlet, hints that the major characters are acting when in public. Brutus tells the conspirators

Let not our looks put on our purposes,  
But bear it as our Roman actors do,  
With untired spirits and formal constancy.  
II,1,225-7

and immediately after the murder Cassius and Brutus in turn speak of the times "this our lofty scene" shall be "acted over" in the future, and Caesar "bleed in sport" (III,1,112ff.).

Another rhetorical feature of Julius Caesar,  
<sup>1</sup>  
which occurs rarely in Hamlet is the device of speaking in the third person, as in Brutus's oration:

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An example is Hamlet's apology to Laertes,  
Was't Hamlet wrong'd Laertes? Never Hamlet ..  
V,11,244ff.



Brutus' love to Caesar was no less than his.  
If then that friend demand why Brutus rose  
against Caesar ... III.11.20-2

This device puts a distance between the speaker and what he is saying, makes his words impersonal, and gives them weight and dignity: it is notable that Brutus, who maintains his dignity and distance in his oration, uses the device, but Antony, who descends from the pulpit, mingles with the crowd, and pretends to be a "plain, blunt man" in contrast to the "orator" Brutus (III, 11, 221-2), speaks in his own person. It is a feature of Caesar's speeches that he speaks in the third person:

Speak; Caesar is turn'd to hear.  
I.i.17.

Yet Caesar shall go forth; for these  
Are to the world in general as to Caesar. predictions  
II.11.28-9

Caesar should be a beast without a heart,  
If he should stay at home to-day for fear.  
No, Caesar shall not; danger knows full well  
That Caesar is more dangerous than he  
II, II, 42-5

Shall Caesar send a lie? II.11.65

Caesar speaks in this way even in conversation with Calpurnia, but the contrast between the public figure, the name, the ideal, "know, Caesar doth not wrong" (III,1,47), Caesar on whose face "things that threaten'd" dare not look (II,11,10), Caesar as

"Unshaken of motion" (III,1,70), constant as the northern star(III,1,60), and the private citizen, Caesar as deaf, subject to the falling-sickness, inclined to be superstitious, continually appears:

I rather tell thee what is to be fear'd  
Than what I fear; for always I am Caesar.  
I,11,211-2

The other important characters, especially Brutus and Cassius, speak sometimes in a similar way, as in the following examples:

Brutus had rather be a villager ...  
I,11,172

You speak to Casca, and to such a man ...  
I,111,116  
Cassius from bondage will deliver Cassius.  
I,111,90

To see thy Antony making his peace ...  
III,1,197

Revenge yourselves alone on Cassius,  
For Cassius is aweary of the world  
IV,111,94-5

think not, thou noble Roman,  
That ever Brutus will go bound to Rome.  
V,1,111-2

Names are thus important in themselves, being marks of the lineage and standing of a character, and indicating the qualities and virtues the character ought to have, though not necessarily those he actually possesses. So Caesar does not fear Cassius.

Yet if my name were liable to fear,  
I,11,199

he would avoid no man sooner; Caesar may be afraid in himself, but his name, his reputation must be impervious to fear. Cassius incites Brutus by comparing his name with Caesar's.

Brutus and Caesar: what should be in that  
Caesar?

Why should that name be sounded more than yours?  
Write them together, yours is as fair a name;  
Sound them, it doth become the mouth as well;  
Weigh them, it is as heavy; conjure with 'em.  
Brutus will start a spirit as soon as Caesar.  
I, 11, 142-7

and by throwing papers in at his window speaking of the "great opinion That Rome holds of his name"

(I, 11, 322ff.). Before the battle Brutus quarrels with Cassius over a question of bribery.

The name of Cassius honours this corruption  
IV, 111, 15

The importance of a man's name is shown in a vivid direct image when the plebeians seize Cinna the poet in spite of his protests.

Cinna: I am not Cinna the conspirator.

4th It is no matter, his name's Cinna; pluck  
Citizen: but his name out of his heart, and turn him  
going.  
III, 111, 36-9

In the final battle Cato and Brutus defiantly charge the enemy shouting out their names.

I will proclaim my name about the field;  
I am the son of Marcus Cato, ho! ...  
V, iv, 3ff.

The soldiers who capture Lucillius take the name he

gives, Brutus, for the person: the name and the ideal, the reputation and the person, are identified in public, but the differences between them are clear to the audience; Caesar the man is less powerful than his name, and Brutus less honourable than his reputation, or his great ancestry,

There was a Brutus once that would have brook'd  
The eternal devil to keep his state in Rome  
I, II, 159-60

My ancestors did from the streets of Rome  
The Tarquin drive, when he was call'd a king  
II, I, 53-4

and the crowd's shout "Give him a statue with his ancestors" (III, II, 54) after Brutus's funeral speech is perhaps ironical. The contrast is apparent also in the character of Portia, who proudly calls herself

A woman well reputed, Cato's daughter  
II, I, 295

yet has to confess in private that she is after all but a weak woman (II, IV, 39).

The names of Caesar (211 times), Brutus (130 times), and to a much lesser degree Cassius (69 times) and Antony (68 times) echo through the play, and are

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A comparison with other plays perhaps emphasises this importance of names; in Hamlet, a very much longer play, the hero's name occurs 55 times according to Bartlett's Concordance, in Macbeth 42 times, Othello 34 times, Coriolanus 43 times (30 as Coriolanus; 13 as Caius or Caius Marcius). It may be significant also that Antony and Cleopatra, where the spirit of Caesar is again prominent, names are also prominent, the name Antony occurring in 116 passages, and that of Caesar (Octavius and Julius) in 152 passages. This again is a much longer play than Julius Caesar, and the repetition of names in this play seems to be a special feature.

used frequently where a pronoun would occur in the other tragedies. Besides contributing to the formality and dignity of the play, the names of Caesar and Brutus in particular have their own special meanings. The word Caesar had long been in use to signify an all-conquering, absolute monarch,<sup>1</sup> and is used in the play with this implication:

3rd Citizen: Let him be Caesar.

4th Citizen: Caesar's better parts  
Shall be crown'd in Brutus.  
III,11,55-6

Caesar is kingly; at the beginning of the play a crown is offered to him three times, and later it is reported

the senators to-morrow  
Mean to establish Caesar as a king;  
And he shall wear his crown by sea and land  
I,111,86-8

the Senate have concluded  
To give this day a crown to mighty Caesar.  
II,11,93-4

The main motive for Brutus's rebellion is that "he

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<sup>1</sup> Especially in the form 'kaiser', see O.E.D. 'kaiser' b, where uses are recorded from 1225 onwards, especially in the phrase 'king or kaiser'; see also O.E.D. 'Caesar' 2 and 2b. Shakespeare had earlier used 'Caesar' in a generic sense, cf. 3 Henry VI, III,1,18, "No bending knee will call thee Caesar now".

would be crown'd", and if Caesar should be crowned,  
"then I grant we put a sting in him" (II,1,12ff.).  
Cassius reminds him that his ancestor drove Tarquin  
from Rome "when he was call'd a king" (II,1,54), and  
would have braved anything to "keep his state in  
Rome As easily as a king" (I,11,160). Caesar is  
like a lion, the king of beasts, among the herd of  
Romans (I,111,106), and more dangerous than danger

We are two lions litter'd in one day  
II,11,46

This "royal Caesar" (III,11,249), whom Brutus had  
wished to kill only in spirit, in name

O that we then could come by Caesar's spirit,  
And not dismember Caesar! But alas,  
Caesar must bleed for it. II,1,169-71

lives on in spirit after his death, and as Antony  
forecasts,

Caesar's spirit, ranging for revenge,  
With Ate by his side come hot from hell,  
Shall in these confines with a monarch's voice  
Cry 'Havoc', and let slip the dogs of war.  
III,1,270-3

The last ironical echo of crowning and kingliness  
comes in the final scenes when a victor's wreath is  
placed upon the head of the dead Cassius

Look, whether he have not crown'd dead Cassius!  
V,111,97

Besides this linkage with royalty, Caesar's name and

the presence of his dead body on the stage during much of Act III, suggest the presence of Caesar's spirit, which dominates the play, although the character has only about 180 in a play of about 2,500 lines. The conspirators "stand up against the spirit of Caesar" (II,1,167) in order to kill him, but are vanquished by that spirit, embodied in the ghost that visits Brutus, and represented in the iteration of the name,

O Julius Caesar, thou art mighty yet!  
Thy spirit walks abroad, and turns our swords  
In our own proper entrails. V,111,94-6

Only on the death of Brutus may Caesar "now be still" (V,v,50).

The name of Brutus has connections already noticed with distinguished ancestors, and also, more prominently, with honour. This is particularly noticeable in the famous lines of Antony's funeral oration, the repeated "Brutus is an honourable man" (III,11,87), but on his first appearance Brutus says

Set honour in one eye and death i'the other,  
And I will look on both indifferently.  
For let the gods so speed me as I love  
The name of honour more than I fear death.  
I,11,86-9

The "name of honour" is frequently attributed to him, not least by himself, as when he tells his audience in his oration, "Believe me for mine honour, and have

respect to mine honour, that you may believe"  
(III,ii,14-5), blames Cassius for selling "the  
mighty space of our large honours" (IV,iii,26),  
and proudly tells Octavius that he could not die  
"more honourable" (V,i,60) than on the sword of  
Brutus. The name of Brutus should, and does  
perhaps in all respects except his share in Caesar's  
death, stand for honour, and it is appropriate and  
sufficient for Lucilius to say to the enemy

When you do find him, or alive or dead,  
He will be found like Brutus, like himself.  
V,iv,24-5

The names of Caesar and Brutus thus have  
symbolic qualities, and represent a concept as well  
as an individual character. One other name which  
has much importance is that of Rome and Roman (72  
times in the play). The fact that he is a Roman  
should in itself indicate certain qualities in a  
man:

those sparks of life  
That should be in a Roman you do want  
I,iii,57-8

What other bond  
Than secret Romans, that have spoke the word,  
And will not palter? II,i,124-6

every drop of blood  
That every Roman bears, and nobly bears,  
Is guilty of a several bastardy,  
If he do break the smallest particle  
Of any promise ... II,i,136-40



... show yourselves true Romans

II,1,223

Who is here so rude that would not be a Roman?

III,11,33

If that thou be'st a Roman, take it forth

IV,111,103

Brutus: Now, as you are a Roman tell me true.

Messenger: Then like a Roman bear the truth I tell.

IV,111,187-8

There is a contrast between the Roman ideal and Romans in action, as is seen in the behaviour of the conspirators and the plebeians, similar to that between the ideal and the living person represented in Caesar and Brutus. However, it is in the Roman tradition ("this is a Roman's part", V,111,89) that Brutus and Cassius commit suicide rather than be taken prisoner, and it is perhaps significant that after the end of Act III the words 'Rome' and 'Roman' occur only in the mouths of the rebels until the final tribute of Antony to Brutus

This was the noblest Roman of them all.

V,v,68

Cassius and Brutus speak of themselves as Romans right to the end, and it may be that this helps to ennoble the conspirators in the final scenes.

Are yet two Romans living such as these?

The last of all the Romans, fare thee well!

It is impossible that ever Rome

Should breed thy fellow.

V,111,98-101

It is Brutus especially who is associated with Rome<sup>1</sup> as the home of truth, honour, liberty and manliness; it is by suggesting that Romans are slaves that Cassius incites him to rebel (I,ii,150ff.; I,iii,103ff.

it is for Rome, "O Rome, I make thee promise..." (II,i,86) that Brutus joins the conspiracy, and he is conscious of the duties of being a Roman,

I had rather be a dog, and bay the moon,  
Than such a Roman. IV,iii,27-8

Brutus was the "noblest Roman" in the sense that he most nearly lived up to the Roman ideal.

A group of images relating to bondage and liberty amplifies this association of Brutus with Rome as an ideal. The Romans are free-men, to whom Pompey and Caesar bring slaves, and whose servants are bond-men,

What tributaries follow him to Rome  
To grace in captive bonds his chariot-wheels?  
I,i,38-9

He hath brought many captives home to Rome  
III,ii,93

Who is here so base that would be a bondman?  
III,ii,31

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<sup>1</sup>The concept of manliness is enhanced by contrast with the weakness or pettiness of women, expressed through the character of Portia, and through imagery, see below, pp.381-2.

Go show your slaves how choleric you are,  
And make your bondmen tremble. IV,111,43-4

It is in the name of freedom that Brutus is  
persuaded to join the conspiracy against Caesar;  
Cassius speaks of "groaning underneath this age's  
yoke" (I,11,61), and later says

Our yoke and sufferance show us womanish.  
I,111,84

Cassius from bondage will deliver Cassius.  
I,111,90

Caesar, he says, is a tyrant, but suicide, if all  
else fails, can release a man from captivity

Nor stony tower, nor walls of beaten brass,  
Nor airless dungeon, nor strong links of iron,  
Can be retentive to the strength of spirit.  
I,111,93-5

The Romans are slaves, says Cassius, and Caesar  
would be no tyrant, "no lion, were not Romans hinds"  
(I,111,106). Brutus and Cassa listen to his plea,  
and Brutus says he would rather be a villager

Than to repute himself a son of Rome  
Under these hard conditions as this time  
Is like to lay on us. I,11,173-5

So after the murder of Caesar the conspirators  
proclaim "Liberty, freedom and enfranchisement"  
(III,1,78, 81, 110), and in future ages they shall  
be called "the men that gave their country liberty"  
(III,1,118). In his speech from the pulpit Brutus

pleads that the death of Caesar has brought liberty.

Had you rather Caesar were living, and die all  
slaves, than that Caesar were dead, to live  
all free men? III,ii,24-6

Yet just before they stab Caesar, the conspirators who so eagerly stand up for freedom fawn upon him with "low-crooked courtships" (III,i,43), and as Antony later says, "bow'd like bondmen, kissing Caesar's feet" (V,i,42). Instead of greater liberty, there are proscriptions and "bills of outlawry" (IV,i; IV,iii,173ff.) in Rome, and Brutus and his friends are forced to chance "upon one battle all our liberties" (V,i,76). Finally Cassius is forced to seek freedom in suicide, and Pindarus, the prisoner he sets free for helping in his death, would rather have remained a slave than become a freeman in this way (V,iii,37ff.). Brutus too, who had said he would never "go bound to Rome" (V,i,112), kills himself, and Strato can reply to Messala's question "Where is thy master?"

Free from the bondage you are in, Messala.  
V,v,54

So the name of Caesar includes the ideals of royalty, kingship, although in person he is weak and sickly in some respects, and to Cassius and the conspirators, except Brutus, he is a tyrant. The

name of Brutus includes the ideals of honour and liberty, as he is descended from the Brutus who drove Tarquin from Rome (II,1,51ff.), but Brutus also fails to correspond to the ideal, for he recognises that his quarrel with Caesar "will bear no colour for the thing he is" (II,1,29), and that he has no justification for murdering Caesar. The conspirators must act and deceive in order to make their purpose seem necessary, as Brutus says, in an image connected with the group just discussed,

let our hearts, as subtle masters do,  
Stir up their servants to an act of rage,  
And after seem to chide 'em. This shall make  
Our purpose necessary and not envious;  
Which so appearing to the common eyes...  
II,1,175-9

This deception, and his joining in an evil conspiracy (II,1,77ff.) are alien to Brutus's honour. There is again a contrast between the manliness and freedom for which the name of Roman stands, and the actual behaviour of the plebeians. These contrasts between the thing itself and the name thus reveal in a rather unusual way through iteration and imagery an aspect of the conflict between reality and appearances which runs through Shakespeare's tragedies.

(11) Background and Action

Most groups of images spring from or emerge at some point into the action of Julius Caesar, as the stress on names emerges in the scene in which Cinna the poet is attacked by the mob. The play has many direct images. The blood in which the conspirators bathe their arms, and which flows from Caesar's dead body, is connected with poetic images of blood and water. The element of superstition is crystallized in the persons of the soothsayers, of sickness in the sick man, Ligarius. All except one of the groups to be discussed are, however, represented in the two scenes (I,iii; II,ii) marked by thunder and the recounting of omens and dreams before the death of Caesar; they will be considered not as separate groups extending the impact of direct images, but as patterns concentrated and fused most noticeably in these scenes.

A soothsayer enters on four separate occasions in Julius Caesar, in the second scene to say to Caesar "Beware the Ides of March" (I,ii,18ff.), in II,iii, when Artemidorus prepares to give his note of warning to Caesar, in II,iv when Portia consults with the soothsayer, and in III,i when Artemidorus tries to present his note. Caesar refuses to hear

the soothsayers in public, but hopes that Antony may cure Calpurnia's barrenness by touching her in the "holy chase" (I,ii,7) of the feast of Lupercal, and consults the augurers before deciding whether to go to the Capitol (II,ii). The coming doom, the death of Caesar and the resultant civil war are foreshadowed in poetic imagery also, associated in two scenes (I,iii; II,ii) with directions for thunder and lightning. In the tempest that precedes Caesar's downfall

all the way of earth  
Shakes like a thing infirm I,iii,3-4

Either there is a civil strife in heaven,  
Or else the world, too saucy with the gods,  
Incenses them to send destruction.  
I,iii,11-13

There follows a catalogue of strange happenings,  
"portentous things" (I,iii,31).

instruments of fear and warning  
Unto some monstrous state. I,iii,70-1

All the signs are fearful and prodigious, and later on when Caesar enters in his night-gown to thunder and lightning, the strange happenings in the night are described again

Nor heaven nor earth have been at peace  
to-night.  
II,ii,1

graves have opened, ghosts squealed, warriors fought

in the clouds, all which Calpurnia interprets as "warnings, and portents, And evils imminent" (II,ii,80-1). These direct images and the vivid symbolic description of the way in which "all these things change from their ordinance" (I,iii,66) create an atmosphere of foreboding which is continued in various ways. Antony prophesies over the dead body of Caesar

A curse shall light upon the limbs of men;  
Domestic fury and fierce civil strife  
Shall cumber all the parts of Italy.

III,i,262-4

and Caesar's spirit shall bring war. Cinna the poet is led against his will to walk out, although "things unluckily charge my fantasy" (III,iii,2). As Antony had prophesied, Caesar's spirit does appear indeed to Brutus (IV,iii,275ff.). Finally, as Caesar just before his death

is superstitious grown of late,  
Quite from the main opinion he held once  
Of fantasy, of dreams and ceremonies...

II,i,195-7

so Cassius before his death rejects Epicurus' views,

And partly credit things that do presage

V,i,79

and another strange sight, eagles replaced by crows and ravens, heralds his downfall.



Several other groups of images have a place in the catalogues of portents. The coming civil war is hinted at, "there is a civil strife in heaven" (I,iii,11). these portents are "heralds" sent by the gods (I,iii,56), and

Fierce fiery warriors fought upon the clouds.  
In ranks and squadrons and right form of war  
II,ii,19-20

There are other images and references to war and mutiny in the first acts, which prepare for the battles of the final scenes, and also suggest a warlike atmosphere in Rome itself. In the opening scene Flavius and Marullus ask why the people support Caesar, "What conquest brings he home?" (I,i,37). why do they climb on battlements to watch him return "in triumph over Pompey's blood" (I,i,56). victor in a civil war? There is much display of weapons in the following scenes, Cassa walking with his sword drawn, "I ha'not since put up my sword" (I,iii,19), and Cassius going armed,

I know where I will wear this dagger then.  
I,iii,69

I am arm'd  
And dangers are to me indifferent.  
I,iii,114

Here, as I point my sword, the sun arises  
II,i,106

all leading up to the stabbing of Caesar. The

incitement of Brutus to join the conspirators is expressed in terms of war and mutiny

.. poor Brutus, with himself at war  
I,ii,46

the man entire  
Upon the next encounter yields him ours.  
I,iii,155-6

the state of man,  
Like to a little kingdom, suffers then  
The nature of an insurrection. II,i,67-9

In Act III Caesar who had stretched his arm far in conquest (II,ii,66), whose victory over the Nervii Antony recalls in his funeral oration (III,ii,177), is stabbed, and Antony prophesies that

Domestic fury and fierce civil strife  
Shall cumber all the parts of Italy.  
III,i,263-4

and Caesar's spirit shall "let slip the dogs of war" in the land (III,i,273). This war engrosses the action of the last two acts. Cassius who had been ready not merely for mutiny, but to outface and "tempt the heavens" (I,iii,53), baring his bosom to lightning and thunder, is driven to suicide on the sword that stabbed Caesar.

The portents appear at night, are connected with dreams. Calpurnia's dream, favourably interpreted by Decius, causes Caesar to go to the Capitol in spite of his wife's warning; Cinna the poet dreams before his death of feasting with

Caesar, and Caesar dismisses the soothsayer saying  
"He is a dreamer; let us leave him" (I,11,24).

The conspirators plot by night, and Caesar's ghost  
appears to Brutus the night before the battle.

Conspiracy is allied to darkness.

O conspiracy  
Shamest thou to show thy dangerous brow by night,  
When evils are most free? O, then by day  
Where wilt thou find a cavern dark enough  
To mask thy monstrous visage? II,1,77-81

and sleep is denied to the plotters; Caesar  
distrusts Cassius, desires about him

Sleek-headed men and such as sleep o'nights  
I,11,193

and the message thrown into Brutus's window, "Brutus,  
thou sleep'st; awake!" (II,1,46) is ironical in  
relation to his inability to sleep in fact

I would it were my fault to sleep so soundly  
II,1,4

Since Cassius first did whet me against Caesar,  
I have not slept. II,1,61-2

I have been up this hour, awake all night.  
II,1,68

It will not let you eat, nor talk, nor sleep.  
II,1,252

All the interim between thought and action is "Like  
a phantasma, or a hideous dream" (II,1,65). Even  
after the death of Caesar, Brutus still may not  
sleep, haunted by Caesar's spirit, and here, as  
earlier, his inability contrasts with the sound

sleep enjoyed by his boy, the innocent Lucius

Boy! Lucius! Fast asleep? It is no matter;  
Enjoy the honey-heavy dew of slumber:  
Thou hast no figures nor no fantasies,  
Which busy care draws in the brains of men;  
Therefore thou sleep'st so sound.

II, I, 229-33

This is a sleepy tune. O murderous slumber,  
Lay'st thou thy leaden mass upon my boy..?

IV, III, 267-8

Brutus: Didst thou dream, Lucius, that thou so criest  
out?

Lucius: My lord, I do not know that I did cry.

IV, III, 296-7

Only in death does Brutus find rest, and put to rest  
the spirit of Caesar

Strato, thou hast been all this while asleep;  
Farewell to thee too, Strato.

V, V, 32-3

Night hangs upon mine eyes; my bones would  
rest..

V, V, 41

Caesar, now be still.

V, V, 50

The conspirators, men who "hide their faces Even  
from darkness" (II, I, 277-8) have their day, its  
beginning symbolised perhaps in Cassa's pointing  
with his sword to the sunrise,

Here, as I point my sword, the sun arises  
II, I, 106

and its end, the return of darkness in the image of  
Cassius' death

O setting sun,  
As in thy red rays thou dost sink to-night,  
So in his red blood Cassius' day is set;  
The sun of Rome is set! Our day is gone.

V, III, 60-3

This poetic image catches up two other themes in the imagery, blood and fire, which appear in connection with the portents before Caesar's death, when

the complexion of the element  
In favour's like the work we have in hand,  
Most bloody, fiery, and most terrible.  
I,iii,128-30

Fierce fiery warriors fought upon the clouds,  
In ranks and squadrons and right form of war,  
Which drizzled blood upon the Capitol.  
II,ii,19-21

Here too blood and fire are connected. Calpurnia dreams of Caesar's statue running with blood like a fountain, in which Romans bathe their hands (II,ii,76ff.) and Decius repeats and reinterprets the dream,

Your statue spouting blood in many pipes,  
In which so many smiling Romans bathed,  
Signifies that from you great Rome shall suck  
Reviving blood ...  
II,ii,85-8

The death of Caesar, who had come to Rome "in triumph over Pompey's blood" (I,i,56), and must now himself bleed (II,i,171) is foretold in these lines, and the welter of blood in the third act prepared for. <sup>1</sup>

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For a discussion of Shakespeare's use of blood on the stage here and in Coriolanus see Leo Kirschbaum, 'Shakespeare's Stage Blood and Its Critical Significance' in P.M.L.A., lxiv (June 1949), 517-29. The author notes how little attention has been paid to Shakespeare's "visual stagecraft", "The whole subject for Shakespeare as well as for other Elizabethan dramatists requires attention" (p.528).

Caesar is stabbed under Pompey's statue "which all the while ran blood" (III,ii,193), and the conspirators bathe their hands in blood,

let us bathe our hands in Caesar's blood  
Up to the elbows, and besmear our swords;  
Then walk we forth, even to the market-place,  
And, waving our red weapons o'er our heads,  
Let's all cry 'Peace, freedom and liberty!'  
III,i,106-10

How many times shall Caesar bleed in sport...  
III,i,116

whil'st your purpled hands do reek and smoke  
III,i,158

those your swords, made rich  
With the most noble blood of all this world.  
III,i,156

Let each man render me his bloody hand.  
III,i,184

So Antony shakes the "bloody fingers" (III,i,198) of Caesar's enemies, and the body, "thou bleeding piece of earth" (III,i,254), with its wounds that "ope their ruby lips" (III,i,260), remains on the stage for the bigger part of Act III, while Antony displays the wounds to the crowd,

Mark how the blood of Caesar follow'd it,  
As rushing out of doors... III,ii,182-3

stirs up men's blood to mutiny, and prophesies that "blood and destruction" (III,i,265) shall be rife in Italy. The last acts reveal the final bloodshed of the civil war, when Cassius' day sets in his "red



In this tempest "dropping fire" (I,iii,10) Brutus cannot sleep, and finds the taper Lucius sets burning for him unnecessary to read by,

The exhalations whizzing in the air  
Give so much light that I may read by them.  
II,1,44-5

After the murder of Caesar, Antony incites the mob who rush off to "burn the house of Brutus" (III,ii,236), "fire the traitors' houses" (III,ii,260), and in the next scene bear off Cinna the poet shouting "Come, brands, ho!, firebrands: to Brutus! to Cassius; burn all" (III,iii,41). Connected with the local patterns at these points are other poetic images, especially in the first two acts,

I am glad that my weak words  
Have struck but thus much show of fire from  
Brutus.  
I,11,176-7

Looks with such ferret and such fiery eyes  
I,11,186

those sparks of life  
That should be in a Roman you do want  
I,111,57-8

Those that with haste will make a mighty fire  
Begin it with weak straws. I,111,107-8

Some two months hence up higher toward the north  
He first presents his fire. II,1,109-10

bear fire enough  
To kindle cowards II,1,120-1

And with a heart new-fired I follow you  
II,1,332



The heavens themselves blaze forth the death  
of princes.  
II,ii,31

O Cassius, you are yoked with a lamb  
That carries anger as the flint bears fire;  
Who, much enforced, shows a hasty spark,  
And straight is cold again. IV,iii,110-3

Portia dies by swallowing fire (IV,iii,156), and just  
before Cassius dies, setting like the red rays of the  
sun (V,iii,60), he sees his own tents burning,

Are those my tents where I perceive the fire?  
V,iii,13

Some strange noises also occur among the  
predigies that herald the murder of Caesar; the  
night on which the conspirators meet is disturbed by  
thunder, called for in I,iii, with the added stage  
direction "Thunder still" (I,iii,100), and in II,ii,  
and poetic images add to the effect of these direct  
sounds,

the bird of night did sit  
Even at noon-day upon the market-place,  
Hooting and shrieking. I,iii,26-8

this dreadful night,  
That thunders, lightens, opens graves, and roars  
As doth the lion in the Capitol I,iii,73-5

Thrice hath Calpurnia in her sleep cried out  
II,ii,2

The noise of battle hurtled in the air,  
Horses did neigh, and dying men did groan,  
And ghosts did shriek and squeal about the  
streets  
II,ii,22-4.

The noise of battle returns indeed in the final war

scenes, and as Calpurnia cries out in her sleep, so the servants of Brutus cry out before their master's death, "Why did you so cry out, sirs, in your sleep?" (IV,iii,304). Imagery of sound is prominent from the beginning of the play, when the same mob that had welcomed Pompey with "an universal shout" (I,i,49) shouts again for Caesar when the crown is offered to him, "the rabblement hooted and clapped" (I,ii,246), and again, after hearing Brutus speak on the reasons for the murder of Caesar, they say "We'll bring him to his house With shouts and clamours" (III,ii,57). It is because a shout for joy is mistaken for an enemy's shout of triumph, that Cassius runs on his sword (V,iii,32ff.). The warning voice of a sooth-sayer breaks through music to reach Caesar's ears,

I hear a tongue, shriller than all the music,  
Cry, 'Caesar!' Speak; Caesar is turn'd to  
hear.  
I,ii,16-7

and towards the end of the play Caesar's ghost enters to warn Brutus as the peaceful music of Lucius has just ended. Brutus and the conspirators who sought to free a Rome "groaning underneath this age's yoke" (I,ii,61) kill Caesar and proclaim liberty, "cry it about the streets" (III,i,79), but at the end have nothing but their own names to "proclaim about the

field" (V,iv,3) in defeat. The direct use of sound in these instances is reflected in image and reference at many points in the play. Caesar is deaf in one ear (I,ii,213) and a man whom Cassius has heard groan and cry out "As a sick girl" (I,ii,124-6). Cassius is dangerous, being a man who "hears no music" (I,ii,204). Antony, whose words leave the Hybla bees soundless (V,i,34), stirs up the crowd in his funeral oration by displaying Caesar's wounds, "poor poor dumb mouths", but were he Brutus, he would

put a tongue  
In every wound of Caesar that should move  
The stones of Rome to rise and mutiny.  
III,ii,232-4

Antony's prophecy, that Caesar's spirit

Shall in these confines with a monarch's voice  
Cry 'Havoc' and let slip the dogs of war  
III,i,272-3

proves true. Perhaps the most brilliant of all the uses of noise is, however, the expression of Portia's fear, who hears a "bustling rumour like a fray" (II,iv,18) proceed from the Capitol before anything has happened there.

The groups of images so far considered in relation to the omens that precede Caesar's death, images connected with superstition, war, dreams, blood, fire

and noise, all find expression in direct images, enter directly into the play's action at some point, and are all connected in the descriptions of the prodigies, that is, by means of poetic imagery. Certain other features of the imagery are represented in these descriptions, features perhaps less prominent because they are less directly connected with the action. Thus all the groups discussed help to create a sense of fear and danger, which is emphasised in the repeated use of these words, particularly in the accounts of the prodigies. The most noticeable characteristic is the terror of the night, the heavens "menace" and the night is "perilous" (I,iii,47), "dreadful" (I,iii,73) and "fearful" (I,iii,126, 137). Men should "fear and tremble" (I,iii,54) in the presence of such "dreadful heralds", for all the portents are

instruments of fear and warning  
Unto some monstrous state. I,iii,70-1

The sense of fear and danger here is notable throughout. Caesar would fear Cassius if his name "were liable to fear" (I,ii,199), and Cassius, as the play shows, fulfils Caesar's thought. He is dangerous, a man not frightened by the "unacoustom'd terror of this night" (II,i,199), outfacing the heavens. Caesar

denies that he fears any portents

danger knows full well  
That Caesar is more dangerous than he.  
II,ii,44-5

and Decius plays on this, "shall they not whisper,  
'Lo Caesar is afraid'?" (II,ii,100-1). On Caesar's  
death the multitude are "beside themselves with fear"  
(III,i,180) and Antony warns Octavius of the dangers  
in Rome (III,i,288). In the last acts the ghost  
comes to make Brutus's blood cold (IV,iii,280), and  
although the rebels "come down With fearful bravery"  
(V,i,9), they lose the battle, and when Cassius' day  
sets "Clouds, dews, and dangers come" (V,iii,64).  
This sense of fear is embodied in women especially.  
Among the sights seen on the eve of Caesar's murder

there were drawn  
Upon a heap a hundred ghastly women,  
Transformed with their fear. I,iii,28-4

and it is natural for women to be weak,

we are govern'd with our mother's spirits;  
Our yoke and sufferance show us womanish.  
I,iii,83-4

bear fire enough  
To kindle cowards, and to steel with valour  
The melting spirits of women II,i,120-2

When that rash humour which my mother gave me  
Makes me forgetful. IV,iii,120-1

Calpurnia fears for Caesar, who is swayed by Decius to

reject her plea, "How foolish do your fears seem now" (II,ii,105), and Portia fears for Brutus, and in spite of her claim

I grant I am a woman; but withal  
A woman that Lord Brutus took to wife;  
I grant I am a woman; but withal  
A woman well-reputed, Cato's daughter.  
Think you I am no stronger than my sex?  
II,i,292-6

Portia herself laments later how hard it is "for women to keep counsel" (II,iv,9), and

How weak a thing  
The heart of woman is! II,iv,39-40

The tempest that accompanies the portents is compared by Casca to other storms including one at sea,

I have seen  
The ambitious ocean swell and rage and foam,  
To be exalted with the threatening clouds.  
I,iii,6-8

Sea and water play some part in the imagery.

Calpurnia dreams that she sees Caesar's statue

Which like a fountain with an hundred spouts,  
Did run pure blood. II,ii,77-8

and after the murder the conspirators bathe their hands in Caesar's blood (III,i,105ff.). Here water imagery connects with imagery of blood, and perhaps shares this direct image of bathing. It is important elsewhere, at the beginning of the play when Flavius appeals to the "commoners" to weep their tears into

the river Tiber

till the lowest stream  
Do kiss the most exalted shores of all  
I,1,64-5

and in the next scene Cassius gives a long account  
of saving Caesar from drowning in the river (I,11,101ff.)  
There is much play with tears, especially by Antony,  
over Caesar's dead body.

Had I as many eyes as thou hast wounds,  
Weeping as fast as they stream forth thy blood  
III,1,200-1

If you have tears prepare to shed them now...  
III,11,173

It is through showing his own tears, his eyes "red as  
fire with weeping" (III,11,120), and causing the  
crowd to weep "O now you weep ... these are gracious  
drops" (III,11,196ff.) that Antony stirs them up to a  
"sudden flood of mutiny" (III,11,215). These images  
and references connected with water and tears lead  
up to the great images of the last two acts, the grand  
generalisation of Brutus, and an echo of the sea-storm  
mentioned by Cassa in the lines of Cassius:

There is a tide in the affairs of men,  
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;  
Omitted, all the voyage of their life  
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.  
On such a full sea are we now afloat;  
And we must take the current when it serves  
IV,111,218-23

Why, now, blow wind, swell billow and swim bark  
The storm is up, and all is on the hazard.  
V.1,67-8

Finally Brutus, who had helped to kill the "noblest  
man That ever lived in the tide of times" (III.1,256)  
is brought to tears for himself, not for Caesar

Now is that noble vessel full of grief,  
That it runs over even at his eyes.  
V.v,13-14

Another aspect of the portents is that "birds and  
beasts" change from "quality and kind" (I,111,64), the  
"bird of night" hoots at noon (I,111,26), a lioness  
"whelped in the streets" (II,11,17), and Cassa meets  
a lion by the Capitol (I,111,20) which makes no attempt  
to harm him. The night roars like "the lion in the  
Capitol" (I,111,75), and the Romans, says Cassius, are  
like sheep to the wolf that is Caesar,

He were no lion, were not Romans hinds.  
I,111,106

Caesar says he would be a "beast without a heart"  
(II,11,42) if he should stay at home; he is more  
dangerous than danger

We are two lions litter'd in one day,  
And I the elder and more terrible.  
II,11,46-7

The animal imagery of these portent-scenes has than a  
special relation to Caesar, a lion among the herd of  
Romans, and is concentrated in these scenes, and also  
in II,1, where Brutus speaks of Caesar as a "serpent's



egg" (II,1,32), tells the conspirators they must not "hew him as a carcass fit for hounds", and Decius says

he loves to hear  
That unicorns may be betray'd with trees,  
And bears with glasses, elephants with holes,  
Lions with toils and men with flatterers.

In the third act too animal images relate to Caesar, who would spurn Cimber "like a cur out of my way" (III, 1, 46), and of whom Antony says

O world, thou wast the forest to this hart;  
And this, indeed, O world, the heart of thee.  
How like a deer stricken by many princes,  
Dost thou here lie! III.1.207-10

There are fewer animal images in the last acts, and no further references to lions. Antony compares Lepidus at length to an ass and a horse (IV,1,21ff.), Octavius and Antony are at the stake "bay'd about with many enemies" (IV,1,48-9), and Brutus speaks of hollow men "like horses hot at hand" (IV,11,23), of himself as a dog (IV,111,27) and a lamb (IV,111,110). In the last act the strange behaviour of birds is again ominous, when eagles are replaced by "ravens, crows and kites" (V,1,85), and Antony's reference to the murder of Caesar links Caesar again with animals

You show'd your teeth like apes, and fawn'd  
like hounds,  
And bow'd like bondmen, kissing Caesar's feet;  
Whilst damned Cassa, like a cur, behind  
Struck Caesar on the neck. V.1.41-4

Thus animal references and images are connected with the portents of Caesar's death, but also relate commonly to Caesar himself, the lion whom the throng follows at the heels (II,iv,34), the king on whom his flatterers and enemies fawn with "low-crooked court'sies and base spaniel-fawning" (III,1,43).

On the night before Caesar's death all the "away of earth Shakes like a thing unfirm" (I,iii,3), and Calpurnia tries to prevent Caesar from going to the Capitol in the morning, suggesting that he excuse himself as being sick (II,ii,53, 65). Brutus puts forward sickness as an excuse for his treatment of Portia

Is Brutus sick? and is it physical  
To walk unbraced and suck up the humours  
Of the dank morning? What, is Brutus sick,  
And will he steal out of his wholesome bed,  
To dare the vile contagion of the night  
And tempt the rheumy and unpurged air  
To add unto his sickness? II,1,261-7

Immediately afterwards a sick man, Ligarius, enters, and joins the conspirators crying "I here discard my sickness" (II,1,321); they are to do

Brutus: A piece of work that will make sick men  
whole  
Ligarius: But are not some whole that we must make  
sick?  
II,1,327-8

The same work that has made Brutus ill with a

"sick offence" within his mind (II, i, 268), and in appearance,

bring me word, boy, if thy lord look well,  
For he went sickly forth II, iv, 13-4

makes Ligarius, whose greatest enemy, says Caesar,  
is "that same ague which hath made you lean"

(II, ii, 113), well again. In Act II there is thus  
a marked emphasis on sickness, which is embodied in  
two forms, sickness of body and sickness of mind,  
in the characters of Ligarius and Brutus. This is  
prepared for in the opening scenes, in the allusions  
to Caesar's infirmities, and other images,

I am, indeed, sir, a surgeon to old shoes.  
I, i, 26

He had a fever when he was in Spain  
I, ii, 119

Alas, it cried, 'Give me some drink, Titinius'  
As a sick girl. I, ii, 127-8

Brutus: 'Tis very like: he hath the falling-sickness.

Cassius: No, Caesar hath it not; but you and I  
And honest Casca, we have the falling-  
sickness.  
I, ii, 256-8

Sickness imagery recurs in the fourth act; instead  
of making "sick men whole", the deed of the  
conspirators produces further griefs, the quarrel  
between Brutus and Cassius, and final destruction:

When love begins to sicken and decay,  
It useth an enforced ceremony.  
IV,ii,20-1

Contaminate our fingers with base bribes  
IV,iii,24

A friend should bear his friend's infirmities  
IV,iii,86

O Cassius, I am sick of many griefs.  
IV,iii,144

The rebels prepare for the final battle while  
ravens and birds of ill-omen

Fly o'er our heads and downward look on us,  
As we were sickly prey. V,i,86-7

which, indeed, they have shown themselves to be.

One other small group of images has a slight connection with the scenes before Caesar's murder, images connected with food. Decius interprets Calpurnia's dream as signifying that from Caesar "great Rome shall suck Reviving blood" (II,ii,87-8), so Caesar goes to the Capitol, refusing to give way to fear.

The valiant never taste of death but once.  
II,ii,33

Brutus's conscience will not let him "eat, nor talk, nor sleep" (II,i,252), so that Portia is driven to ask

Am I yourself  
But, as it were, in sort or limitation,  
To keep with you at meals, comfort your bed..?  
II,i,282-4

The ability to eat and drink, like the ability to sleep, is a good sign; Brutus and Cassius are reconciled after their quarrel over a bowl of wine (IV,iii,158), and it is a good omen when eagles gorge and feed from soldiers' hands (V,i,81).

Caesar complains of Cassius

Let me have men about me that are fat;  
Sleek-headed men and such as sleep o' nights;  
Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look.  
I,ii,192-4

Cassius is not one to "profess" himself "in banqueting to all the rout" (I,ii,77-8), and wonders what meat Caesar feeds upon "that he is grown so great" (I,ii,150). The weak Lepidus is a mere beast of burden to Antony,

On objects, arts, and imitations, <sup>one that feeds</sup>  
IV,i,36-7

Images of food occur at other points throughout the play, although the total number is relatively small.

This rudeness is a sauce to his good wit,  
Which gives men stomach to digest his words  
With better appetite I,ii,394-6

Let's carve him as a dish fit for the gods  
II,i,173

I dreamt to-night that I did feast with Caesar  
III,iii,1

You shall digest the venom of your spleen  
IV,iii,47

One other small group of images is interesting

as having no connection with the scenes preceding Caesar's death, except in the lines

his silver hairs  
Will purchase us a good opinion  
And buy men's voices... II.1.144-6

There are possible references in the phrases "basest metal" (I,1,66) and "honourable metal" (I,11,313)<sup>1</sup>, but imagery of money really enters the play in the third act. Brutus says of the death of Caesar, "ambition's debt is paid" (III,1,63), and Antony refers in his funeral oration to Caesar's enrichment of Rome, and reads the will.

He hath brought many captives home to Rome,  
Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill.  
III.11.93-4

To every Roman citizen he gives.  
To every several man, seventy-five drachmas.

The people will beg a hair of Caesar and bequeath it "as a rich legacy" (III,11,141) says Antony. In the next act money imagery becomes prominent. Antony and Octavius determine how to "cut off some charge in legacies" (IV,1,9), and Antony compares Lepidus to an ass bearing gold (IV,1,21ff.). Money is the mainspring of the quarrel between Brutus and Cassius,

The Folio reads "mettle" in both instances, but mettle and metal are the same word in origin, see O.E.D., mettle, sb.

who is accused of selling offices for gold (IV,111,10), and of refusing to supply Brutus with "certain sums of gold" (IV,111,70). Brutus's complaint and their reconciliation are expressed in a series of images

shall we now  
Contaminate our fingers with base bribes,  
And sell the mighty space of our large honours  
For so much trash as may be grasped thus?  
IV,111,23-6

I had rather coin my heart,  
And drop my blood for drachmas, than to wring  
From the hard hands of peasants their vile  
trash  
IV,111,72-4

so covetous  
To look such rascal counters from his friends  
IV,111,79-80

within, a heart  
Dearer than Plutus' mine, richer than gold:  
If that thou be'st a Roman, take it forth;  
I, that denied thee gold, will give my heart.  
IV,111,100-3

When Cassius dies, Brutus says he owes more tears  
"than you shall see me pay" (V,111,102), and  
Lucilius, pretending he is Brutus, offers money to  
his captor,

There is so much that thou wilt kill me straight  
V,iv,13

but with no success. Thus imagery connected with  
money centres in a pronounced local pattern in the  
scene of the quarrel between Brutus and Cassius, and

except for an odd reference occurs only in the last three acts; its chief dramatic function is to present the quarrel of the two leaders, though at the same time the haggling over money and indications of robbery (IV,iii,23, 75) and bribery (IV,iii,3, 24, 71), suggest dissension and corruption following Caesar's death.

### Conclusion

As in the case of Hamlet the dramatic imagery of Julius Caesar may be seen as dividing into two complementary streams. The element of public formality, marked particularly in the public and almost ritual quality of Caesar's murder, in the great orations, and the tremendous emphasis on names as symbolic of the virtues or greatness to be expected of a Caesar, a Brutus, a Roman, contrasts, and at the same time is united with the imagery of sickness, omens and superstition, and the welter of blood, fire and war revealing or caused by the weakness and treachery underlying appearances. Many of the groups of images have been considered as radiating, as it were, from the two 'omen' scenes preceding Caesar's death (I,iii; II,ii), and the fusion of themes in these scenes has been noted.



This fusion of themes occurs elsewhere in the play, and perhaps one of the most interesting features is the way in which the full circle of events is presented through imagery in the final scenes, and the fall of Cassius and Brutus endowed with dramatic irony. The name, Brutus, redolent of honour and antiquity at the start of the play,

Brutus will start a spirit as soon as Caesar  
I,ii,147

is all that is left to Brutus at the end when on the point of defeat he proclaims his name in the field of battle (V,iv), and finds that Caesar's spirit, which he would have destroyed (II,i,169), still "walks abroad" (V,iii,95) and appears in the form of the ghost. The conspirators had gathered to kill Caesar as the sun arose (II,i,105), and the death of Cassius is imaged in the lines

O setting sun,  
As in thy red rays thou dost sink to-night  
So in his red blood Cassius' day is set.  
V,iii,60-2

which catch up other themes in suggestions of fire and blood. The Cassius who had spoken of himself and the Romans as bondmen (I,iii,113), and had killed Caesar to proclaim liberty, is driven finally to ask his own bondman, Pindarus, to kill him, "Now be a

freeman" (V,111,41): it is only through his own death that Brutus is freed from a bondage which he had thought the death of Caesar would resolve,

... where is thy master?  
Free from the bondage you are in, Messala;  
The conquerors can but make a fire of him  
V,v,53-5

In Julius Caesar, as in Macbeth and Hamlet, various groups of dramatic images fuse in the total effect; they arise from and in turn expand the significance of the dramatic action.

## CHAPTER 8

The Dramatic Imagery of 'The Revenger's  
Tragedy' and 'Women Beware Women'

THE REVENGER'S TRAGEDY and WOMEN BEWARE WOMEN

The occurrence of iterative poetic images associated with direct images in action, stage effect and property, and with groups of iterative words, is not peculiar to Shakespeare's plays. The two tragedies to be briefly examined in this chapter contain fine poetry, with a concentration of imagery rare in Shakespeare's plays, yet neither has the range or appeal of Hamlet or Macbeth. In both plays the variety of sources of poetic images is fairly wide, though by no means so wide as those used by Shakespeare and yet the effect of this imagery is not to expand or universalise, but to intensify or even limit the scope of the action. In this respect The Revenger's Tragedy and Women Beware Women provide an interesting comparison with the plays already discussed, for a variety and range of themes rather than of sources, of the object-matter rather than the subject-matter, seem to be the distinguishing feature of Shakespeare's plays.

The Revenger's Tragedy and Women Beware Women are also interesting because they show how common certain groups of poetic images are in tragedy, for instance, images derived from disease, which may be

suggested by the theme rather than the author's personality. The poetic imagery of each has been examined by Marco Mincoff<sup>1</sup> in an attempt to determine the authorship. His definition of an image was perhaps even narrower than that of Miss Spurgeon:

the investigation should be confined to images that are really ornamental in intention, although it is not possible to draw a hard and fast line. But often an image is introduced for the sake of a joke, or as a means of character-drawing, to throw light on the speaker, or it may follow the tone of everyday conversation too closely to be classed as strictly poetic, and here the danger becomes very great that the poet's personality may become masked by that of his creatures.

Una Ellis-Fermor examined independently the sources of the poetic imagery of The Revenger's Tragedy,<sup>2</sup> and they arrived at opposite conclusions concerning the authorship and the personality of the author.

Perhaps this was due partly to the limitation of their study to pictorial poetic imagery, for they ignored some dramatically important groups which are

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<sup>1</sup> The Authorship of The Revenger's Tragedy, Sofia 1939, p.5.

<sup>2</sup> "The Imagery of the "Revenger's Tragedie" and the "Atheist's Tragedie" in M.L.R., xxx (July 1935), 289-301.

not amenable to analysis by subject-matter, and many other aspects of dramatic imagery. However, the basic inadequacy of seeking these authors' personalities in the sources of poetic images seems to lie in the fact that the principal sources for imagery in tragedies of this period, disease, sex, light and darkness, nature, the body, seeing and blindness, are common to various authors.

(1) The Revenger's Tragedy

This play opens with two contrasting direct images; Vindice, meditating over the skull of his poisoned mistress, watches a procession of court nobles pass over the stage, and apostrophises them and the skull in a magnificent soliloquy. Here at once the keynote of the play is struck, the contrast between the luxury and corruption which flourish together in the court. The skull appears again in III,v, as the instrument by which the Duke is poisoned, the lecher and murderer who had turned the living woman into the skull. Again the poetry of the scene is magnificent, and Vindice apostrophises the grisly object in his hand in a series of poetic images:

Do's the Silke-worme expend her yellow labours  
For thee? For thee do's she vndoe herselfe?  
Are Lord-ships sold to maintaine Lady-ships  
For the poore benefit of a bewitching minute?..  
Dos every proud and selfe-affecting Dame  
Camphire her face for this? and grieve her

Maker  
In sinfull baths of milke... III.v.75ff.

The effect of these poetic images is continually enhanced by the concrete image, the skull, which carries over the ironic and bitter implications of the first scene, draws into itself and focusses many of the threads of imagery running through the play, becoming a symbol of corruption, revenge, needless expense, the waste of luxurious living.

In the two speeches over the skull the most characteristic features of the poetic imagery receive their grandest expression. The language of the play is notable for its force and movement, much of which is due to two very large groups of images and associated iterative words, images of personification and bodily action and movement. The lines quoted above begin with a double personification of the skull and of the silkworm, and form the most concentrated instance of what is common throughout the play, for there are 67 images of personification excluding Vindice's repeated apostrophes to the skull.

Personification is rarely a mere invocation or common-place attribution of physical or moral qualities to an abstraction, as in

O liberty thou sweete and Meauenly Dame  
III,11,6

It is nearly always more elaborate, endowing an object or abstract quality with the power of physical or moral action, so making the image more forceful:

let not Relentlesse Law,  
Looke with an iron for-head on our brother.  
I,11,36-7

if iudgement have cold blood,  
Flattery and bribes will kill it.  
I,11,105-6

I would thanke that sinne,  
That could most iniury him, and bee in league  
with it.  
I,11,177-8

Some stirring dish  
Was my first father  
I,11,202-3.

A notable feature of this frequent personification is the wide range of things personified, which are not limited to the usual abstractions, Law, Chastity, Time and so on, but include a sword, tears, midnight, a jewel, rain, "Some darkned blashlesse Angle" (III,v,15), iron, music, as for example

Sword I durst make a promise of him to thee  
Thou shalt dis-heire him, it shall be thine  
honor  
I,111,195-6



Did we make our teares women for thee?  
III,vi,112

More numerous than these forceful personifications are images of bodily action or movement, sometimes approaching personification so nearly that distinction becomes difficult or arbitrary, as in

O kept upon your Tongue, let it not slip,  
Death too soone steales out of a Lawyers lip.  
I,ii,75-6

Indeed personification is perhaps the most striking and extreme form of most of these images of action which frequently consist in the metaphorical use of some verb of motion, such as strike (which occurs 11 times in the play), ride (11 times), enter (8 times), out (9 times) and many others. Few of these images suggest a picture, and the appeal of such a phrase as "let this talke glide" (I,iii,80) seems to be intellectual, arousing vague sets of ideas connected with motion; other examples from Act I are:

... my vengeance shall reach high  
I,ii,196

This our age swims within him. I,iii,27

Gather him into bouldnesse ... I,iii,39

And thou shouldst swell in money ...  
I,iii,86

A sight that strikes man out of me.  
I,iv,8

We have greefe too, that yet walkes without  
Tong  
I, iv, 28

Heer let your othe meet ... I, iv, 65

This succession of verbs of action, usually human action, has a cumulative effect throughout the play, providing a dynamic and living quality in the language itself through their general implication, the idea or feeling of movement, and giving a sense of restlessness and activity to the whole. The accumulation of words of violence or movement applied to objects normally immobile surrounds every scene with an atmosphere of tenseness and haste, and through these images the speed of the intrigues of Act II, emphasised in Vindice's

Nine Coaches waiting - hurry, hurry, hurry.  
II, i, 228

Now Cuckolds are a quoyning, apace, apace, apace,  
apace.  
II, ii, 159

the violence of the Duke's death, and the swiftness of the revenges at the end are prepared for, and carried over into every scene.

Closely associated with these two large groups of images is a multitude of references to parts of the body, especially to the tongue (31 times), hand (20), eye (26), face (19), head (13), forehead (10), and

cheek (10). The use of these words is often highly imaginative, vivid and unusual. The use of "tongue" to mean voice or language is common, but in The Revenger's Tragedy the bodily sense is retained and the common meaning enlivened by stress on physical action, as in

If our Tongue  
Were sparing toward the Fact ... I, 11, 64-5

[Ladies] .. tongues as short and nimble as their  
heels

I, 11, 204

When his tongue struck upon my poore estate.  
II.1.121

**Your Tongues have struck hotte yrons on my face.**  
II, 1, 259

Nimble and desperate tongues ...IV,11,50-1

The word "face" is used to denote externalities, outward shows covering rotten interiors.

Courtiers ...  
Putting on better faces than their owne  
I, iv, 35-6

... may not hereafter times open in as faire  
faces as this? V.1,21

and this sense is given peculiar force through direct association with the skull, the symbol of the rottenness and the truth beneath the facade.

Does every proud and self-affecting Dame  
Camphire her face for this? III,v,87-8

The "forehead" appears as the body's most prominent

feature, and is used in a variety of subtle ways, from the suggestion of guilty conscience in "with what forehead can I look on her" (IV, iv, 105) to the very complex

Throwne inok upon the for-head of our state  
I, ii, 7.

Other parts of the body are used similarly, sometimes almost personified, sometimes endowed with the ability to act as though they were independent live things.

No, I would raise my state upon her breast  
And call her eyes my Tennants ...  
II, i, 108

this cheeks  
Shall still hence forward take the wall of this.  
II, i, 81

This emphasis on parts of the body, considered often as active agencies, extends the effect of the images of personification and bodily action, and the sense of violence and movement running through so much of the play's imagery provides its most important characteristic.

The central symbol of the skull not only provides the most vivid personification in the play, but through the two great speeches directly associated with it serves as a focus of other groups of images, in particular the large groups of images relating to wealth and food and drink, which help to create a sense

of luxury and expensive living in the court. The contrast between this and the immediate connotations of the skull, death and corruption, is emphasised in the double direct image of the opening scene, where the procession of the Duke and nobles with a "traine" across the stage suggests the court magnificence. The luxury of the court is again presented directly in the final scene, which has a dumb-show of the installation of the new Duke, and calls for "Musick. A furnisht Table is brought forth: then enters the Duke & his Nobles to the banquet". The keynote is struck in Vindice's opening soliloquy, which has several images of money,

the spend-thrift veynes of a drye Duke  
I,1,11

the artificiall shine  
Of any womans bought complexion I,1,25-6

Vengeance thou murders Quit-rent ...  
On keepe thy day, houre, minute, I beseech,  
For those thou hast determind; him; who ere  
knew  
Murder vnpayd? I,1,42-6

Money is the court's reward for evil; the Dutchess tries to win Spurio to her lust with money, and Lussurioso offers it as a reward for villainy,

Many a wealthy letter have I sent him  
Sweld vp with Iewels I,11,127-8

And thou shouldst swell in money, and be able  
To make lame beggers crouch to thee.

I,iii,86-7

It is with the prospect of courtly pleasure expressed  
in terms of food and wealth that Vindice tempts and  
overcomes his mother

O thinke vpon the pleasure of the Pallace,  
Secured ease and state; the stirring meates,  
Ready to move out of the dishes, that e'en  
now quicken when their eaten...  
II,i,222ff.

and the seal is set upon their bargain when she  
accepts money from him on behalf of Lussurioso, who  
regards chastity and honour as saleable

honesty  
Is like a stock of money laid to sleepe,  
Which nere so little broke, do's neuer keep.  
I,iii,130-2

Money again appears as a property when Vindice accepts  
the employment of murdering his disguised self, Plato,  
again from Lussurioso in IV,ii, and as his mother had  
been overcome by the "comfortable shine" of coins  
(II,i,140), so Vindice here pretends to be dazzled  
by their "bright vnusuall shine" (IV,ii,119). In  
this atmosphere it is appropriate that Hippolito  
should address his sword of vengeance as "thou  
Bribelesse Officer" (I,iv,62), and that when  
Lussurioso succeeds his father as Duke he should  
speak of killing his half-brothers in terms of money

he and the stepsonnes,  
Shall pay their lives for the first subsidies.  
V,111,14-5

One aspect of "this luxurious day wherein we  
breath" (I,111,124) and the corruption that accompanies  
it is expressed in terms of wealth and bribery.  
Another aspect is revealed in terms of food imagery,  
which is constantly linked with lust, as in Spurio's  
image of his origin, begot

After some gluttonous dinner, some stirring  
dish  
Was my first father; when deepe healths went  
round ...  
The sinne of feasts, drunken adultery.  
I,11,201-11

Lust is frequently expressed in terms of food; any  
kin barring his sister "As mans meate in these dayes"  
(I,111,72), a woman is "held now no dainty dish"  
(I,111,173). Lussurioso speaks of tasting Castiza  
(II,11,173-4), and Antonio's wife dies by poison  
after the Duchess's youngest son had "fed the ravenous  
vulture of his lust" (I,iv,50) on her. The death  
of the Duke by poison is appropriate not merely  
because he had poisoned Vindice's mistress (I,1,17)  
and because of his own boast later on

Many a beauty have I turned to poyson  
In the deniall  
II,11,356-7

but because poison is thought of as eating into things.

as when Vindice says that Spurio's lust for the Duchess "like strong poyson eates" (II,ii,187) into the Duke's forehead. So when the Duke kisses the skull Vindice has prepared for him, there is a special irony in the lines

Duke: My teeth are eaten out.

Vindice: Hadst any left?

Hip.: I thinke but few.

Vindice: Then those that did eat are eaten.

III,v,169-72.

The imagery of feed, and its linkage with lust, and imagery of wealth, bribery, and luxury, are given consummate expression and integrated in Vindice's second great speech over the skull,

Does euery proud and selfe-affecting Dame  
Camphire her face for this? and grieue her  
Maker  
In sinfull baths of milke - when many an  
infant starues,  
For her superfluons outside, all for this?  
Who now bids twenty pound a night, prepares  
Musick, perfumes and sweete-meates?

III,v,87-92

The death of the Duke follows, amid perfumes (III,v,148), his cries concealed by the sound of music (III,v,201, 233-6), and Vindice's creation of a brothel in words is then realised in the stage action in the meeting of Spurio and the Duchess. Both these groups of



images are most numerous in the first act, perhaps because it is necessary to create atmosphere at the beginning of the play, and the early concentration of images of food and luxury does this admirably.

The number of images in the four groups discussed totals well over 200, and comprises the greater part of all the poetic images in the play. There are several smaller groups which are by no means insignificant, and more notable than these, a tremendous emphasis on sex in its vicious aspects, contrasted continually with the punishment due both from heaven and earth. The immorality of the court is kept constantly in mind by continual reference to words such as bawd, harlot, cuckold, strumpet, whore, pandar, adultery, incest, rape and lust. This stress in iterative words reinforces the sexual impact incidental to many of the images in the groups discussed, particularly food images, as was noted above. The emphasis on sex is matched in The Revenger's Tragedy by an equally intense moral emphasis, shown not merely in the consciousness of "sin", a word used 30 times, even by such vicious characters as the Duke and Spurio,

My hairens are white and yet my sinnes are Greene.  
II,ii,360

Had not that kisse a taste of sinne 'twere  
sweete.  
III,v,219

but in the iteration of words such as "false" (16 times), "treason" (13), "wicked" (7), "wrong" (11), "base" (14), "unnatural" (8), "shame" (17), "villain" and "villainous" (41), and of words relating to justice and punishment both in this world and the next, in particular "heaven" (31 times). Heaven is spoken of usually as an active agency able to interfere in human affairs, or as a euphemism for God. The iteration of these words, a number of images derived from law, and the unusual number of references to death extend an atmosphere of moral indignation throughout the play, an atmosphere established by direct images, and reinforced by certain smaller groups of poetic images. The justice of the law may be negatived by the interference of the Duke or his sons, as is seen in the trial scene (I,ii) where the Duke suspends the death penalty, in the prison scene (III,iv), and in the formal swearing over Hippolito's drawn sword to kill the younger brother who has raped Antonio's wife, and was long since found "Guilty in Heaven" (I,iv,70),

if, at the next sitting,  
Indgment speake all in gold, and spare the blond  
Of such a serpent  
I,iv,66-8.

Vindice calls constantly on heaven to punish the sins

of the court,

Why do's not heaven turne black, or with a  
frowne  
Vndoe the world - why do's not earth start vp.  
And strike the sinnes that tread nppon't?  
II,1,275-7

Has not heauen an care? Is all the lightning  
wasted?  
IV,11,173

Is there no thunder left, or ist kept vp  
In stock for heauier vengeance? IV,11,223-4

Let our hid flames breake out, as fire, as  
lightning.  
To blast this villanous Dukedome vext with sinne.  
V,11,5

The symbols of heavenly justice demanded by Vindice  
finally appear in the direct images "A blasing-star  
appeareth" (V,111,3) and "It thunders" (V,111,56).

Many of the small group of disease images are  
connected with this atmosphere of righteous  
indignation, as when Castiza spurns her mother, who  
would be a bawd, in one of the author's favourite  
puns

you heauens please,  
Hence-forth to make the Mother a disease  
II,1,264-5

Similar imagery expresses the penitence of Gratiana  
when she is threatened by Hippolito and Vindice.

O you heauens! take this infectious spot out  
of my soule  
IV,1v,59

Now the disease has left you, how leproously  
That Office would have cling'd unto your  
forehead.  
IV,1v,71-2

I am recoverd of that foule disease  
That haunts too many mothers IV,iv,135-6

are not you she  
For whose infect perswasions I could scarce  
Kneele out my prayers. IV,iv,140-2

Most of the disease images are connected with the temptation of Castiza and Gratiana, but one of the most striking is used by Vindice in reviling the Duke who revels in "sin that's rob'd in Holines" (III,v,147),

now ile begin  
To stick thy soule with Vloers, I will make  
Thy spirit grienous sore, it shall not rest,  
But like some pestilent man tosse in thy brest.  
III,v,185-8

Darkness has its customary association with evil, suggested at the opening of the play by the torch-lit procession over the stage. The scene of Lussurioso's mistaken assault on his father takes place at night, and the strange bustle and light about the court at midnight is emphasised

is the day out ath-socket  
That it is Noone at Mid-night? II,ii,257-8

The contrast of darkness and light stresses the artificiality and unnaturalness of the court life, where dark corners are sought by day, as for the murder of the Duke

in this un-sunned lodge  
Where-in tis night at noone III,v,20-1

and lights are sought by night for revelry and lechery

last reueelling night  
When Torch-light made an artificiall noone ...  
I, iv, 32-3

If any thing be dambd  
It will be twelue a clock at night; that  
twelue  
Will never scape;  
It is the Indas of the howers; wherein,  
Honest saluation is betrayde to sin.  
I, iii, 75-9

carefull sisters spinne that thread ith night,  
That does maintaine them and their bawdes ith  
daies!  
II, ii, 160-1

Another group of images connected with water is  
confined largely to the metaphorical use of verbs such  
as swim, drown, flow, wade, fathom, as in

... as impious steept as hee.  
I, i, 5

When griefe swum in their eyes III, iv, 55

but there is one extended sea image,

Our sorrowes are so fluent,  
Our eyes ore-flow our tounge; words spoake  
in teares  
Are like the murmures of the waters, the sound  
is lowdly heard, but cannot be distinguisht.  
III, vi, 49-52

and in relation to the repentance of Gratiana, water  
imagery has a special value, both because of the  
gentleness of the images, contrasting with the usual  
violence of language, and because of their linkage  
with the values of heaven,





is her call for music

Lowest Musick sound; pleasure is Banquet's  
guest.  
III,v,233

that drowns his last cry. Music accompanies the final banquet, and there are several poetic images relating to music which emphasise its place in the luxury of the court,

Turnes my abused heart-strings into fret  
I,i,16

... just upon the stroke  
Iars in my brother - twill be villanous Musick.  
IV,i,32-3

Why Ile beare me in some straine of melancholie,  
And string myselfe with heavy-sounding Wyre,  
Like such an Instrument, that speakes merry  
things sadly.  
IV,ii,28-30

There are a few images relating to sport and building, and one other notable feature is a number of references to tragedy or acting, when the characters speak as though conscious of acting a part. Unlike similar passages in Antonio's Revenge and Hoffman such remarks are integrated into the

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In these plays characters step out of role and comment on the play,

thou and I  
Will talke as Chorus to this tragedie.  
Antonio's Revenge I.v.  
So shut our stage up, there is one act done  
Ended in Otho's death; 'twas somewhat single;  
Ile fill the other fuller,  
Hoffman Act I.



context in The Revenger's Tragedy and given a double meaning; they are used legitimately as imagery as in Macbeth,<sup>1</sup> but at the same time the audience understands them as applying to the play, as in

Vengeance thou murders Quit-rent, and whereby  
Thou shonest thy selfe Tennant to Tragedy  
I, i, 42-3

... violent rape  
Has playd a glorious act ... I, iv, 6

Now to my tragick businesse, looke you brother,  
I haue not fashiond this onely-for show  
And vaelesse property; no, it shall beare a  
part  
E'en in it owne Reuenge. III, v, 103-6

When the bad bleedes, then is the Tragedie good.  
III, v, 216

Dost know thy kye thou big-voys'st cryer?  
V, iii, 58

In spite of a variety of sources, the dramatic imagery of The Revenger's Tragedy is thus concentrated on a few themes, and the main emphasis in the imagery is on the contrast between the luxury of the court and its corruption in life, represented in images of wealth, food, the household and music, and the punishment that is stored up for the crimes associated with this luxury, indicated in legal imagery, imagery

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<sup>1</sup> of. Macbeth I, iii, 127-9, or II, iv, 5-6  
the heavens, as troubled with man's act  
Threaten his bloody stage.

of water, of darkness and light and disease, and the skull, token of death and a more terrible corruption. These contrasting themes have their own direct images, of banqueting, the court of law, the star and thunder that appear as signs from heaven, associated with them, and also large groups of iterative words. The intensity and speed of action of the play are created largely through the predominance of images and words of personification and bodily movement. All these themes are bound together in the central image of the skull and Vindice's great soliloquies, for the skull "drest up in tires" is a perfect symbol of the luxurious facade behind which corruption is concealed,

sure, 'twould fright the sinner  
And make him a good coward, put a Reneller  
Out off his Antick amble  
And cloye an Epicure with empty dishes.  
Here might a scornfull and ambitious woman  
Looke through and through her selfe  
III, v, 98-100.

### (11) Women Beware Women

The most notable direct image in Women Beware Women is the game of chess between Livia and Leantio's mother in II, ii, the moves and the defeat of the latter symbolising the assault on Bianca by the Duke which takes place concurrently. The whole



They'll commonly lie crooked, that's no matter,  
Wise gamesters  
Never find fault with that ... III,111,107-9.

Other images of gaming in the play extend this theme,

Inquire at three years' end amongst young wives  
And mark how the game goes I,11,36-7

That plays at hot-cookies with rich merchants'  
wives  
I,111,25

I've had a lucky hand these fifteen year  
At such court-passage with three dice in a dish  
II,11,43-4

ventur'd out at twilight to the court-green  
yonder  
And met the gallant bowlers coming home  
III,1,214-5.

This imagery is chiefly concentrated in the scene of the chess game, where the word 'game' has a double sense, and 'duke' signifies the modern 'rook' as well as the Duke of the play.

You're cunning at the game, I'll be sworn, madam  
II,11,300

Livia: The game's even at the best now ...  
Has not my duke bestirr'd himself?

Mother: Yes, faith madam;  
Has done me all the mischief in this game  
II,11,415-21.

This gaming imagery thus amplifies one aspect of the play's action, the way in which the debauchery which the main characters take so lightly has such terrible consequences, proves so serious in the end.

The game of chess mirrors the lustful intrigue

against Bianca which is the mainspring of the action, and words connected with lust and adultery, including 'sin', which generally means sexual wrongdoing, set the keynote of the play from the first scene, when Leontio says in his second speech

To have the toil and griefs of fourscore years  
Put up in a white sheet, tied with two knots;  
Methinks it should strike earthquakes in  
adulterers  
When even the very sheets they commit sin in  
May prove, for aught they know, all their last  
garments.  
I. i. 20-4

At the beginning the destruction of his apparently quiet, happy marriage through the corrupt court influence is hinted at; he can go to church and pray well, not like gallants who only look at faces "As if lust went to market still ..." (I,i,34). Some of the court characters appear in the second scene, the Ward who is eager to get married, "I'll have a bout with the maids else" (I,ii,115), and Hippolito whose love for his niece is not innocent as it appears, "there's no lust but love in't" (I,ii,71). He speaks to her in the "unhallow'd language Of a near sinner" (I,ii,217), and she at last recognises his "blood ... is mix'd with lust" (I,ii,231). The action moves completely into the court as Leantio and Bianca are absorbed into the



This use of 'sin' has generally little moral implication, and this is true also of much of the religious language of the first three acts, which provides no strong moral tone to counter or condemn the corrupt atmosphere of the court. Only occasionally, as in Hippolito's thought "'Twas not a thing ordain'd, heaven has forbid it" (I,ii,156) are there hints of moral condemnation. Images connected with religion,

Temptation is a devil will not stick  
To fasten upon a saint I,i,168-9

O fie, what a religion have I leap'd into!  
I,iii,21

As much redemption of a soul from hell  
As a fair woman's body from his palace  
III,ii,329-30

and the appearance of the Lord Cardinal in the procession from which the Duke sees Bianca, a procession of solemnity to St. Mark's temple, "religiously observ'd by the Duke and state" (I,iii,86), prepare for the entry in Act IV of the Cardinal, but not for his strong denunciation of the Duke's actions. The morality of his speeches seems alien to the general tenour of the play, imposed from the outside, not generated from within through a character who suffers, resents or has a part in the

action: and all his moralising is to little purpose, for he acquiesces eventually in the marriage of the Duke and Bianca, "I profess peace and am content" (V.1,54). Nevertheless, the introduction of the Cardinal does point a contrast between the world of the court and the world of normal values, and there is an increased use of religious terms and imagery in this act,

To play a hot religious bent with some of you  
And, perhaps, drive you and your course of sins  
To their eternal kennels IV.1,84-6

You do heaven's vengeance and the law just  
service  
IV.11,59

there's a jest hell falls a-laughing at,  
IV.11,64

At the end all the central characters meet their deaths, and Hippolito moralises,

Last and forgetfulness has been amongst us,  
And we are brought to nothing: some blest  
charity  
Lend me the speeding pity of his sword  
V.1,187-9.

The Cardinal himself is something of a symbolic character, a representative of accepted religion and morality who stands apart from the general corruption, and his symbolic nature is emphasised by the direct image of the lights with which he enters and leaves the stage.





here's sin made and ne'er a conscience put to't  
A monster with all forehead and no eyes!  
Why do I talk to thee of sense or virtue,  
That art as dark as death? and as much madness  
To set light before thee as to lead blind folks  
To see the monuments ... IV,1,93-8

tells the mid-day sun what's done in darkness  
Yet, blinded with her appetite, wastes her  
wealth ...  
IV,1,153-4

Put case one must be vicious, as I know myself  
Monstrously guilty, there's a blind time made  
for't ...  
Art, silence, closeness, subtlety and darkness  
Are fit for such a business. IV,11,5-9

The entry of the Cardinal in Act IV heralds the ascendancy of this imagery, which shows in its symbolism a change of emphasis from the sight imagery which is common in the earlier acts of the play, particularly marked in the scene of the chess game, and represented directly perhaps in the inspection of Isabella by the foolish Ward and Sordido in III,111. They do their best to peep under her skirts (III,111,120ff.), but for all their efforts fail to see that she is with child; as Sordido laments later, "how would you have me see through a great farthingale?" (IV,11,117-8).

Imagery of sight springs from the action in the opening scenes, where Leantio thinks that if Bianca is "cas'd up from all mens' eyes" (I,1,170) she will be safe from the lust of Florence; but through

the same window she watches Leantio go (I,111,13) and a little later is seen by the Duke (I,111,108ff.). Hippolito and Isabella must keep their deeds "hid from sin-piercing eyes" (II,1,238), and when Bianca is enticed to the court it is to see the pictures and the monument "worth sight indeed" (II,11,284), which turns out to be the lustful Duke. Bianca sees horrors she had never thought to see (II,11,425), while Leantio's mother plays chess, not keeping watch,

Livia: I've given thee blind mate twice.

Mother: You may see, madam,  
My eyes begin to fail.

Livia: I'll swear they do, wench. II,11,397-8

The scene closes with an ironic contrast in meaning between Bianca's words and those of the Mother

Bianca: Faith, I've seen that I little thought to see  
I'the morning when I rose.

Mother: Nay, so I told you  
Before you saw't, it would prove worth your  
sight.  
II,11,461-3

The old sights cease now to satisfy Bianca, who wants luxury, all things rich,

As good be blind and have no use of sight  
As look on one thing: what's the eye's treasure  
But change of objects? III,1,143-5

She now provides the splendour of the court where  
sin shines, not goodness, and there is no spirit there

But what divinely sparkles from the eyes  
Of bright Bianca; we sat all in darkness  
But for that splendour. III,ii,98-100

To Leantio she becomes a "glistering whore" who  
shines in the "court sun" (IV,ii,21-2).

Imagery of sight becomes more complex through  
its linkage with the symbolism of light and darkness,  
and the stronger moral tone of the last two acts.  
In the first acts it is associated with another  
group of images relating to secrecy and freedom which  
tends to fade out as light and darkness imagery becomes  
prominent. Leantio wants to keep Bianca hidden from  
men's sight, not trusting to her virtues, however  
much he praises them.

View but her face, you may see all her dowry  
Save that which lies lock'd up in hidden virtues  
Like jewels kept in cabinets. I,i,55-7

In spite of his precautions, and belief that his  
mother will take care of her, since old mothers  
"when sons lock chests are good to lock to keys"  
(I,i,176), she is seen by the Duke, and virtually  
imprisoned by him until she yields, in a place where  
it would be useless for her to cry out or seek to  
escape (II,ii,339ff.); he says



Imagery of freedom, secrecy and prison enters also into the seduction of Isabella, which parallels the main action to some extent. Marriage to the Ward, which to Isabella had been enforced misery, since marriage at the best is bad enough,

[Women] do but buy their thraldoms, and bring  
To men to keep 'em in subjection;  
As if a fearful prisoner should bribe  
The keeper to be good to him, yet lies in still.  
I,ii,172-5

becomes instead an escape to freedom after she has listened to Livia's tale offering her "a largeness in your will and liberty" (II,i,160). The griefs she had "Look'd up in modest silence" (II,i,77) cease to bother her and she gives herself to Hippolito to whom it is freedom to let his eye

Dwell evilly on the fairness of thy kindred  
And seek not where it should? it is confin'd  
Now in a narrower prison than was made for't.  
II,i,9-11

The new 'freedom' Bianca obtains through her seduction and introduction into the court circle is marked by the complete transference of the action to the court from Act III onwards, and a number of images and references relating to the household and building is linked with images of freedom in expressing this change. At first Bianca is happy with the poor home of Leantio's mother; Leantio and she have "A shelter

o'er our quiet innocent loves" (I,1,52), but after her meeting with the Duke she demands luxury, and the house becomes "the strangest house For all defects" (III,1,16-17); she wants cushion-cloths and silk quilts, a better house near the court, "some pleasant lodging i'th'high street" (III,1,128) where she may watch gallants through the window, and is caustic in her reply to the Mother's proverb

Mother: 'Tis an old saying. One may keep good cheer  
In a mean house; so may true love affect  
After the rate of princes in a cottage.

Bianca: Troth, you speak wondrous well for your old  
house here  
'Twill shortly fall down at your feet to thank  
you  
III,1,39-43.

Corruption and luxury go together; as a prelude and temptation to her seduction, Bianca is shown ornaments and pictures of Livia's rooms (II,11,277ff.), and later Leantio is enticed by Livia in a similar way, "You never saw the beauty of my house yet" (III,11,358). The richness of Bianca's lodgings exceeds that she was brought up to know (IV,1,44-6), and Leantio having accepted Livia's offer appears in rich-clothes to see Bianca in her "sumptuous lodging" (IV,1,50ff.). The contrast between Leantio's love and the lust which breaks up his marriage is expressed in images of

building, which are connected with religious imagery through the use of the word 'temple'

I'm as rich as virtue can be poor  
Which were enough after the rate of mind  
To erect temples for content plac'd here  
I, I, 128-30

Honest wedlock  
Is like a banqueting-house built in a garden ...  
... base lust,  
With all her powders, paintings and best pride  
Is but a fair house built by a ditch-side.  
III, I, 89-94

Leantio goes on to compare a strumpet to a "goodly temple" built on rotting carcasses (IV, I, 98-9), and these references to the word 'temple' are caught up in the Cardinal's image of man's body, his "only privileg'd temple upon earth" (IV, III, 43) and his final words to the Duke in this scene,

'Tis nothing virtue's temples to deface;  
But build the ruins, there's a work of grace!  
IV, III, 68-9

The house and building imagery chiefly relates to the contrast between the poverty of Leantio's home, with its riches of true love, and the luxury of the court concealing lust and rottenness. <sup>1</sup> The intense atmosphere

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This imagery also extends in another direction, into the streets; the extension is relatively slight, but such images or references as those to the poulterer's wife (I, II, 106ff.), to the country maid "dressing her head By a dish of water" (I, III, 70), to the new houses built for gallants in the next street (III, I, 199), or to stepping into a "comfit-maker's shop to let a cart go by" (III, III, 62-3) help to give life and a sense of realism to the dialogue.



of the court is built out of the insistence on lust already noted, and imagery of wealth, luxury, food and music. Its pomp and luxury are presented in several direct images; Bianca's contact with the court begins when she sees the procession of Knights, Cardinals, the Duke and "states of Florence" pass "in great pomp" over the stage to various sorts of music (I,iii,104). When Bianca leaves Leontio she appears at a court banquet where there are music and dancing (III,i), and Leontio follows her to appear "richly dressed" (IV,i,42) at her court-lodging. In IV,iii, a procession of Lords and Ladies headed by the Duke and Bianca in rich dress passes "in great state" over the stage, and it is in an elaborate court entertainment that Isabella, Hippolito and Livio meet death.

In these direct images luxury, wealth, music and feasting are shown as characteristic of the court. Poetic imagery relating to money and luxury extends this, and grows naturally out of the position of Leontio as a factor and his poverty. He takes Bianca from "parents great in wealth" (I,i,49), but she exchanges riches in fortune (I,i,59) for the riches of virtue (I,i,126). While Leontio attends the affairs of a "rich work-master" (I,i,158), Bianca is hired by

the luxury of the court, and sells herself to the Duke for a false 'freedom'. Isabella marries the foolish Ward, whose only recommendation is wealth (III,11,113), to conceal her sin, and it is with wealth that Livia tempts Leantio (III,11,359ff.). Worldly wealth is contrasted with the richer treasures of love and virtue. At first Bianca is to Leantio "the most unvalu'dst purchase" (I,1,12), a gem although penniless.

View but her face, you may see all her dowry  
Save that which lies lock'd up in hidden virtues.  
Like jewels kept in cabinets. I,1,54-6

O fair-ey'd Florence,  
Didst thou but know what a most matchless jewel  
Thou now art mistress of ... I,1,161-3

Leantio "cas'd up" this jewel Bianca (I,1,170) as a "gem no stranger's eye must see" (III,1,177), and, like a miser, finds he has hoarded only to lose all (III,11,191-5). His "life's wealth" (III,11,307) becomes an ornament of the court and "sparkles" like a jewel for the Duke (III,11,98; V,1,48-9), while Leantio, "the poor thief ... that stole the treasure" is ignored (III,11,88). Imagery of money and jewels has this special relationship with the main action involving Leantio, Bianca, and the Duke, but is common elsewhere, expressing the standard of values in the court. Livia tempts Leantio with luxury (III,11,368ff.) and to

the Ward and Sordido, acquiring a wife is like buying ware in a great penthouse, a farthingale, which conceals faults (II,ii,132ff.). It is also in terms of money that the Cardinal condemns the sins of the Duke.

'tis example proves the great man's bane.  
The sins of mean men lie like scatter'd parcels  
Of an imperfect bill; but when such fall,  
Then comes example, and that sums up all.

IV, i, 217-20

Music is also part of the court atmosphere, and except for the "variety of music and song" which accompanies the court procession in the first act (I,iii,104) does not appear until III,ii, when the action has moved completely into the court circle. Music now accompanies Livia's banquet, Isabella sings a song, and there is fine irony in the Ward's calling on Hippolito to show him the way in dancing with Isabella (III,ii,182-4). There is music for the state entrance of the Duke and Bianca in IV,iii, and again for the masque and dancing of the final act. It is notable that music enters into the poetic imagery also from the third act onwards; the use of music in action and poetic imagery arises simultaneously:

the tempest  
That sung about mine ears, - like dangerous  
flatterers,  
That can set all their mischief to sweet tunes  
III, 11, 255-7

Thunder shall seem soft music to that tempest  
IV, 1, 90

here's a conversion is at this time, brother,  
Sung for a hymn in heaven IV, 1, 260-1

now I perceive there's a young quirister in  
her belly, this breeds a singing in my head  
IV, 11, 121-3.

Feasting and food imagery also help to suggest the  
court atmosphere, and eating and sexual incontinence  
are linked in imagery from the start of the play.  
Lust and food are linked in the central scene of the  
play, the scene of Livia's banquet where Bianca's  
adultery is openly displayed, as Leantio observes,

I see 'tis plain lust now, adultery 'bolder'd;  
What will it prove anon, when 'tis stuff'd full  
Of wine and sweetmeats, being so impudent fasting?  
III, 11, 34-6

Leantio's newly-acquired captainship is "a fine bit to  
stay a cuckold's stomach" (III, 11, 46-7); he compares  
himself in his sorrow to an ass that "feeds on  
thistles till he bleeds again" (III, 11, 57), and a  
sequence of food images continues through the first  
part of this scene with its direct image of a banquet  
set out,

women, when they come to sweet things once  
They forget all their friends, they grow so  
greedy,  
Nay, oftentimes their husband. III, 11, 75-7

laid in more provision for her youth  
Fools will not keep in summer III,ii,117-8

Let's turn us to a better banquet, then;  
For music bids the soul of man to a feast  
III,ii,127-8.

Here a strong local pattern of images links banqueting directly with lust, and this unpleasant connection is presented in poetic imagery associated with Livia, the Ward and the relationship of Hippolito and Isabella in the early part of the play. On her first appearance Livia objects to Isabella's being forced to marry the Ward; marriage is easier and gives more freedom to a man.

he tastes of many sundry dishes  
That we poor wretches never lay our lips to  
I,ii,40-1.

Hippolito, she says, is "all a feast" (I,ii,152) for any woman who has him, and she incites Isabella to "taste" her happiness, hiding her suggestions in images of food.

Livia: If you can make shift here to taste your happiness  
Or pick out aught that likes you, much good do  
you;  
You see your cheer, I'll make you no set dinner.  
II,i,121-4

Isabella listens to her tale, begins to make love to Hippolito, and at once becomes infected with the same kind of imagery in expressing her lust.

When we invite our best friends to a feast,  
'Tis not all sweetmeats that we set before them;  
There's somewhat sharp and salt, both to whet  
appetite  
And make 'em taste their wine well; so methinks.  
After a friendly, sharp, and savoury chiding  
A kiss tastes wondrous well and full o'the grape.  
II,i,198-203

She will marry the Ward, will not expect to fare well every day, but will be glad to see Hippolito, to have "some choice oates once a-week" (II,1,223). So when Bianca is trapped by the Duke, Guardiano shows her "naked pictures" beforehand

to prepare her stomach by degrees  
To Cupid's feast, because I saw 'twas queasy  
II,11,406-7.

On his return Leantio thinks of the welcome he will receive from his wife, who will be greedy for love "after a five-days' fast" (III,1,106), and after the banquet scene, the Ward and Sordido inspect Isabella as if she were food, "here's eggs o'the spit now; We must turn gingerly" (III,111,24-5). To Isabella he is a caterer providing for Hippolito's table (III,111,39-40), and she is glad to walk for him

'Twill get affection a good stomach, sir, -  
Which I had need have to fall to such coarse  
viatuals.  
III,111,124-5

The sexual intrigues expressed in this food imagery are completed by the end of Act III, and there are fewer food images in the last two acts. Through its association with the court characters in the early scenes, and its prominence in Act III which includes the scene of Livia's banquet, imagery of food, associated with sex, helps to suggest both the luxury

and the incontinence of the court circle.

Another group of images which has a special relationship to the corruption of the court relates to sickness, and increases in importance and number as the play progresses. The first hint of it occurs in the first scene between court characters, when Hippolito confesses his incestuous love for Isabella,

let me be stark dead  
Ere the world know I'm sick I,11,160

Livia promises to help him, and will "do a strange cure" (II,1,50) on his mortal disease, and Hippolito finds that her cure is indeed strange, "beyond sorcery this, drugs, or love-powders" (II,1,232). When Bianca is seduced by the Duke she becomes infected,

since mine honour's leprous, why should I  
Preserve that fair that caus'd the leprosy?  
Come, poison all at once. II,11,429-31

and her spurning of Livia is only "want of use", for her modesty is "sea-sick a little" (II,11,476) at first. Leantio returns to find his love displaced by lust which he links with "vaults where carcasses lie rotting" (III,1,99), and his first reaction on seeing a changed Bianca is "Sure you're not well, Bianca ...?" (III,1,113). She refuses to kiss him,

There's many a disease kiss'd in a year by't  
III,1,164

and his mother adds to the taunt in an aside, saying

her son is

like a fellow  
That rides another country of a plague,  
And brings it home with him to his own house.  
III,1,172-4

Leantio becomes certain of her adultery, and feels as though he "wears a plague-sore that would fright a country" (III,11,55); Livia comes to ease his torment, telling him "he's not wise That loves his pain or sickness" (III,11,353-4), and it is ironic now that when he visits Bianca, the cause of his pain, he should make her sick,

the rooms  
Perfum'd well after the corrupt air it leaves:  
His breath has made me almost sick, in troth.  
IV,1,108-10

The Duke rightly reckons that Hippolito with his "ulcerous reputation" (IV,1,140) will be sensitive about his sister's honour, but her reaction to the murder of Leantio is not expected,

I'll imitate the pities of old surgeons  
To this lost limb, who, ere they show their art,  
Cast one asleep, then cut the diseases'd part  
IV,1,172-4

Drop plagues into thy bowels without voice  
Secret and fearful! IV,11,54-5

The Duke insists on making marriage, in the Cardinal's words, "the garment Of leprosy and foulness" (IV,111,16-7), and all their sins pile up so that in the final act it seems, says Hippolito,



as if the plagues of sin  
Had been agreed to meet here altogether  
V,1,199-200

and Bianca at last realises her "deformity in spirit"  
(V,1,246).

Imagery of disease, like nearly all the groups examined, relates to the sexual corruption which forms the main theme of the play; the process of corruption is expressed in images of gaming, disease, money, food, luxury, sickness, freedom and secrecy, seeing and blindness, and all these groups are closely connected with the constant emphasis on lust, adultery and sin. They combine with the direct images of processions and dancing, the banquet and masque scenes, to create the narrow, luxurious and vicious atmosphere of the court. The images have varied sources, but all express the same theme, and although the contrast between the true richness of love, and false luxury of the court and its lust is suggested, the entrance of the Cardinal in Act IV with strong condemnatory speeches is a shock. It is something of a relief, and certainly more in keeping with the general tenour of the play, that the Cardinal should end his moralising by agreeing to the Duke's marriage and

kissing Bianca. Even the smaller groups of images relating to growth, fruit and storms, marked especially in the two great speeches of Leontio in Act III expressing his anticipation of happiness in Bianca's love, and discovery of her lust (III,1,82ff. and III,1,871ff.), afford little contrast to the confined atmosphere of the court. As in The Revenger's Tragedy, the dramatic imagery of Women Beware Women is concentrated on a few themes; both plays contain magnificent dramatic verse, but in both the vision is narrow.

### Conclusion

Perhaps the chief characteristic of these two plays is their intensity of atmosphere. In spite of a range of sources for poetic imagery which, though not as wide as Shakespeare's, is still quite wide, and in spite of the fact that many of these sources (such as food and disease) for images are common to most or all of the five plays discussed, the scope of The Revenger's Tragedy and Women Beware Women is extremely limited. The tremendous concentration of imagery in them relates almost entirely to the intrigue and the vicious atmosphere of the respective courts, there is little extension into the outer world or into a larger moral atmosphere except for

Vindice's fits of moral indignation and the repentance of his mother, or the remote figure of the Cardinal in Women Beware Women. The fate of the world or of a nation is not involved, nor are the heroes identified with humanity. There are no characters such as the Old Man in Macbeth, the Gravediggers in Hamlet, or Cinna the Poet in Julius Caesar, through which the action is related to the everyday world. There is not the wide variety of powerful direct images found in Shakespeare's plays. The imagery does not expand, but intensifies the narrow world of the play.

In the plays of Shakespeare discussed the dramatic imagery expands the atmosphere and action, and seems to resolve in all three into contrasting but complementary streams. In Macbeth it takes the form of the uniting of opposites in image and phrase ("fair is foul"; sleep and sleeplessness; blood and cleansing), emerging into action in such effects as Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking and the banquet scene commencing in order and ending in confusion. The fusion of contrasting streams within the image is less marked in the other two plays, but the manifold oppositions between the stateliness and corruption of the court in Hamlet and between the ideal and the actual in Caesar, Brutus and the Romans in Julius Caesar are

united in the total effect of the play. Such wide-ranging oppositions between groups of images, revealing the varied aspects of the plays's world and action, are almost entirely lacking from The Revenger's Tragedy and Women Beware Women.<sup>1</sup>

These plays of Shakespeare embrace a whole moral world of good as well as evil, and a whole physical world, supernatural as well as natural, nation as well as individual, outsiders as well as those deeply involved in the action, and the dramatic imagery is largely responsible for this range. The scope of The Revenger's Tragedy and Women Beware Women, for all their splendour of imagery, rarely extends beyond the limits of the petty, vicious courts of obscure, unnamed Dukes.

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<sup>1</sup> This suggests that the distinguishing mark of Shakespeare's use of poetic imagery may lie not in number or in variety of sources, but rather in the application to a variety of themes; not in a wealth of subject-matter so much as in a variety of object-matter.

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## BOOKS AND ARTICLES CONSULTED

This list is divided into three sections. The first indicates the main texts used; the second lists books and articles referred to in the text. The third section consists of a number of works on imagery which I have read but not referred to, and is included to indicate the range of authors whose imagery has been the subject of critical writing, to give credit to some suggestive or provocative works, and to amplify what may be the first approach towards a bibliography of writings on imagery.

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